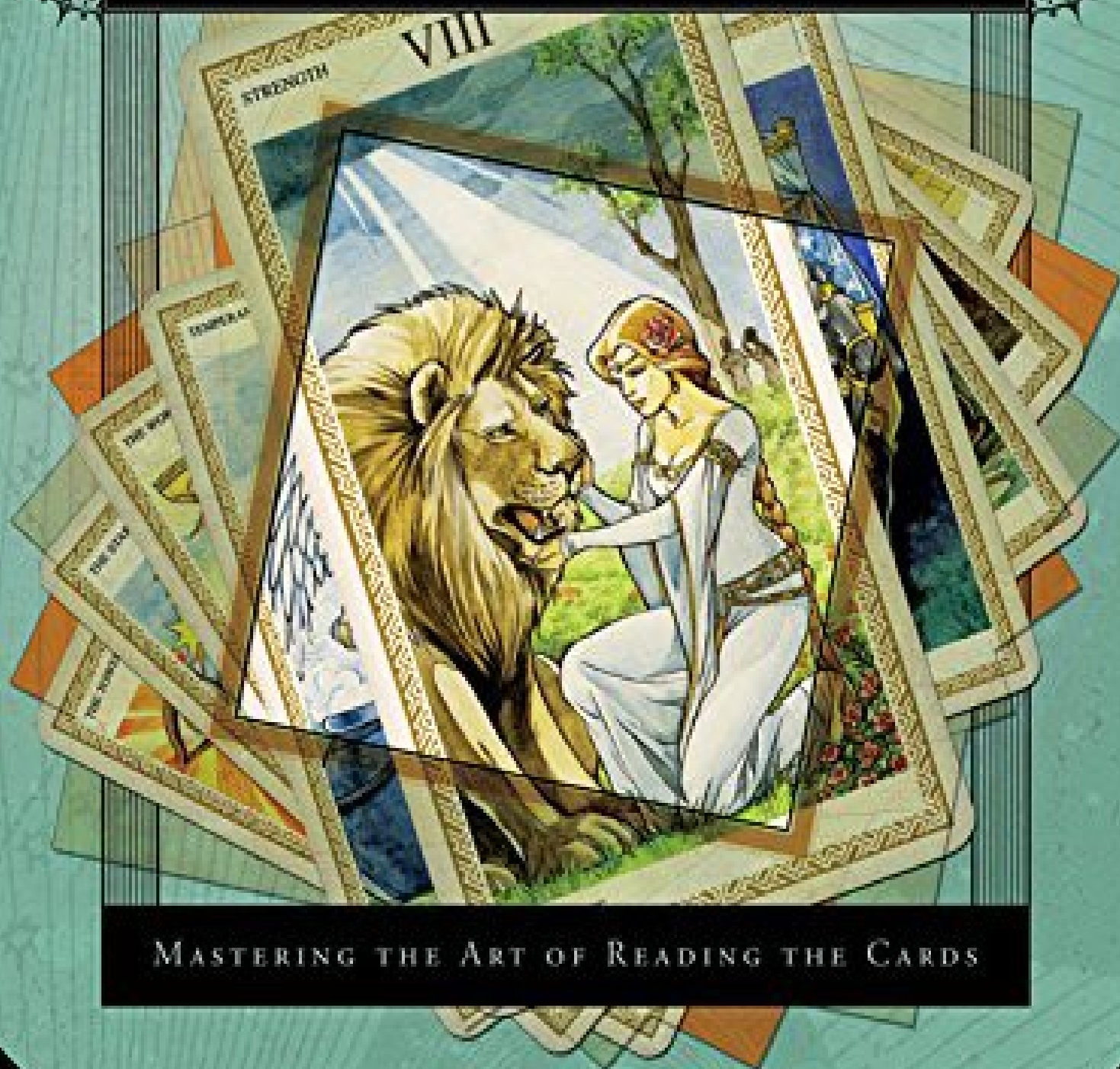


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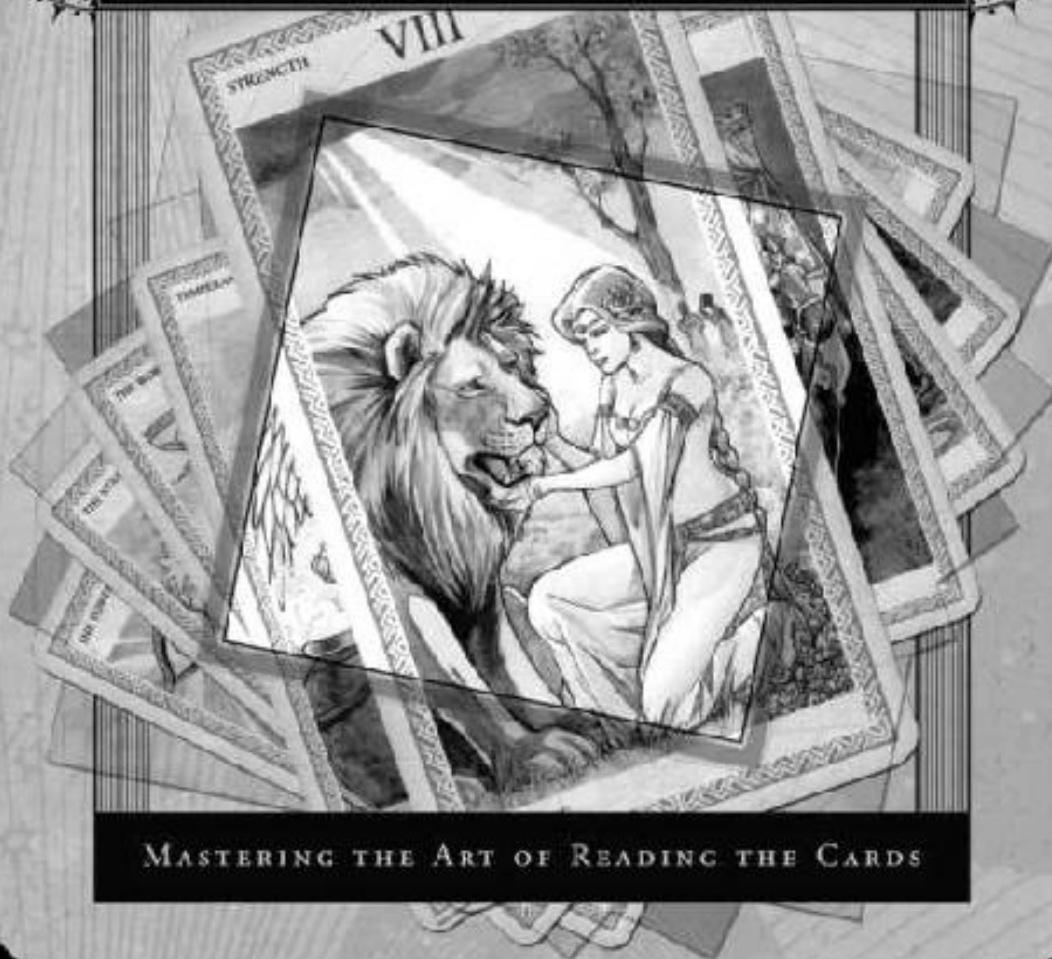
TAROT*101



MASTERING THE ART OF READING THE CARDS

KIM HUGGENS

TAROT • 101



MASTERING THE ART OF READING THE CARDS

TAROT 101

About the Author

Kim Huggens has been studying Tarot since the age of nine, and is the co-author of *SolInvictus: The God Tarot* (Schiffer Publications, 2007) and the in-progress companion deck *Pistis Sophia: The Goddess Tarot*. She lives in Cardiff, Wales, where she works as a veterinary receptionist part-time to fund her university studies in Ancient History. She moved to Cardiff in 2002 for her undergraduate degree in Philosophy, and also graduated with an MA in Religion in Late Antiquity from Cardiff University in 2007. Kim has given numerous talks and workshops on the subject of Tarot, divination, Paganism, and mythology in the UK, and regularly runs Tarot courses. She is a practicing Vodouisante and Thelemite, and a member of the OTO. She lives with her partner and cat, and in her spare time plays *Call of Cthulu* and *Dungeons and Dragons*, writes short fiction, goes for walks in graveyards and wishes she could translate Sumerian.

To Write to the Author

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KIM HUGGENS

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This work is dedicated to every willing Tarot student and to the constant journey toward understanding and wisdom.

CONTENTS

[Acknowledgments](#) xvii

[A Note about the Structure of the Course](#) xix

[Getting Started](#) xxiii

[1. Introduction](#) 1

[What Is Tarot?](#) 1

[What Can It Do?](#) 3

[Why Are You Here?](#) 5

[Choosing a Tarot Deck](#) 5

[Deck Reviews](#) 10

[Where to Buy](#) 11

[Tips for Caring for and Storing Your Deck: Spills, Clumping, and Other Accidents](#) 11

[Optional Homework](#) 12

[Further Reading](#) 12

[2. The Language of Tarot](#) 13

[Tarot Origins: History and Myth in Context](#) 13

[The Nature of Symbolism](#) 14

[Learning Tarot Effectively](#) 16

[Myths Surrounding Tarot](#) 24

[Optional Homework](#) 26

[Further Reading](#) 26

[3. The Major Arcana: Introduction and Progress Cards](#) 29

[The Order of the Majors: Norms and Variants](#) 30

[Ideas of Importance](#) 31

[Joseph Campbell's Monomyth](#) 32

[The Hero's Journey](#) 33

[0 The Fool](#) 37

[I The Magician](#) 40

[VII The Chariot](#) 43

[Optional Homework](#) 46

[Further Reading](#) 46

[4. The Major Arcana: Feminine Archetypes](#) 47

[Gender in the Cards](#) 47

[Maiden, Mother, Crone, Whore, and Other Feminine Archetypes](#) 49

[Goddess Archetype Spread](#) 50

[II The High Priestess](#) 52

[Developing Your Intuition](#) 55

[III The Empress](#) 56

[XVII The Star](#) 59

[Optional Homework](#) 62

[Further Reading](#) 62

[5. Reading Tarot: Beginnings](#) 63

[The Purpose of a Reading](#) 63

[The Objectives of a Reader](#) 64

[The Physical Process of Reading](#) 65

[Your Reading Style](#) 69

[Saying the Meanings Aloud](#) 70

[Learning with Others: Practice Readings](#) 71

[Less Is More: The One-Card Spread](#) 71

[Practicing Objectivity](#) 72

[Optional Homework](#) 74

[6. The Major Arcana: Masculine Archetypes](#) 75

[Carl Jung and the Fourfold Divine Masculine](#) 75

[The Four Elements, Suits, and Courts](#) 77

[Other Masculine Archetypes](#) 81

[IV The Emperor](#) 82

[V The Hierophant](#) 85

[IX The Hermit](#) 88

[The Elemental Spread](#) 91

[Optional Homework](#) 92

[Further Reading](#) 92

[7. The Major Arcana: Virtues and Vices](#) 93

[Medieval Virtues in the Tarot](#) 93

[Thelemic Retellings](#) 95

[XI Justice/VIII Adjustment](#) 98

[VIII Strength/XI Lust](#) 101

[XIV Temperance/Art](#) 104

[Alchemical Roses](#) 107

[The Great Rite Alchemy Spread](#) 108

[Optional Homework](#) 109

[Further Reading](#) 109

[8. The Major Arcana: Cyclical Things](#) 111

[Abstract Concepts in the Tarot](#) 111

[Fate vs. Free Will](#) 112

[Your Birth Card and Year Card](#) 113

[Rotary Mysteries, the Sphinx's Riddle, and Ezekiel's Vision](#) 116

[X The Wheel of Fortune](#) 119

[La Danse Macabre](#) 122

[XIII Death](#) 123

[XXI The World](#) 126

[The Wheel of the Year Tarot Spread](#) 129

[Optional Homework](#) 131

[Further Reading](#) 132

[9. The Tarot Spread](#) 133

[The Purpose of the Tarot Spread](#) 133

[Different Types of Spreads](#) 135

[Pre-Written vs. Created Spreads](#) 136

[Some Classic Spreads](#) 138

[The Earliest Recorded Spread](#) 143

[Using Reversals](#) 144

[Optional Homework](#) 147

[Further Reading](#) 147

[10. The Major Arcana: The Dark Side](#) 149

[The Dark Side: Learning How to Cope](#) 149

[Negative into Positive: Becoming a Proactive Tarot Reader](#) 152

[The Dark Night of the Soul](#) 153

[XII The Hanged Man](#) 155

[XVI The Tower](#) 159

[XV The Devil](#) 162

[The Underworld Spread](#) 165

[Optional Homework](#) 166

[Further Reading](#) 167

[11. The Major Arcana: What's Out There? \(In Here?\).....](#) 169

[As Above, So Below](#) 169

[Astrology and the Tarot](#) 170

[The Sun and Moon in Neoplatonism](#) 172

[XVIII The Moon](#) 174

[XIX The Sun](#) 177

[XX Judgement](#) 180

[VI The Lovers](#) 183

[The Astrological Spread](#) 186

[Optional Homework](#) 187

[Further Reading](#) 188

[12. Creating Your Own Spreads](#) 189

[The Features of a Spread](#) 190

[Creating a Simple, Short, Purpose-Driven Spread](#) 191

[A Note on Patterns and Card Positions](#) 195

<u>Creating Other Types of Spreads</u>	196
<u>Finding Inspiration</u>	198
<u>Optional Homework</u>	198
<u>Further Reading</u>	199
<u>13. Court Cards: Introduction and Approaches</u>	201
<u>A Note on Court Card Titles</u>	202
<u>Old-Fashioned Views of the Court Cards</u>	202
<u>Useful Approaches to the Court Cards</u>	205
<u>Elemental Attributes of the Court Cards</u>	206
<u>The Nature of Each Court Card</u>	208
<u>MBTI Types and the Court Cards</u>	210
<u>Keirsey Temperaments</u>	211
<u>Optional Homework</u>	213
<u>Further Reading</u>	213
<u>14. Court Cards: Cups and Coins</u>	215
<u>The Coins Court</u>	215
<u>The Cups Court</u>	219
<u>Astrological Attributes of the Court Cards</u>	222
<u>Using Significators</u>	224
<u>Optional Homework</u>	226

15. Court Cards: Wands and Swords 227

The Swords Court 227

The Wands Court 232

Your Personal Tarot Court 236

Court Card Vision Boards 240

The "Where Am I?" Spread 241

Optional Homework 241

16. The Minor Arcana: Introduction and Coins/Earth 243

Names of Suits 244

The Four Worlds and the Minor Arcana 245

Kabbalah and the Minor Arcana 246

Kabbalah and the Major Arcana 248

Numerology and the Minor Arcana 249

The Suit of Coins/Earth 250

The Resources Spread 254

Optional Homework 255

Further Reading 255

17. The Minor Arcana: Methods for the Minors and Cups/Water.. 257

Rider-Waite and Thoth Meanings: Some Differences 257

Interpreting the Minors-Methods of Approach 258

[Major Arcana, Court Cards, and Minor Arcana: One Big Happy Family](#) 260

[The Suit of Cups/Water](#) 263

[A Relationship Spread](#) 268

[Optional Homework](#) 269

[Further Reading](#) 269

[18. The Minor Arcana: The Mind Applied to Tarot, and Swords/Air](#)
..... 271

[Intellectual Tarot](#) 271

[The Suit of Swords/Air](#) 274

[Elemental Interaction in Readings](#) 279

[Astrology and the Minor Arcana](#) 280

[Optional Homework](#) 285

[Further Reading](#) 286

[19. The Minor Arcana: Magic, the Will, and Wands/Fire](#) 287

[The Suit of Wands/Fire](#) 287

[Tarot for Magic](#) 292

[Pathworking the Tarot](#) 297

[Using "Keys": The Missing Card in a Run](#) 300

[The "Who Am I?" Spread](#) 301

[Optional Homework](#) 302

<u>Further Reading</u>	302
<u>20. The Difficult Questions</u>	305
<u>Dealing With Difficult Questions/Querents</u>	305
<u>Laws on Tarot</u>	309
<u>Your Tarot Ethics</u>	310
<u>The Reading Style Spread</u>	314
<u>Optional Homework</u>	315
<u>Further Reading</u>	315
<u>21. Tips and Tricks When Reading for Others</u>	317
<u>Chatting Isn't Cheating: Interactive Readings</u>	317
<u>A Matter of Seating</u>	319
<u>Atmosphere and Appearance</u>	320
<u>The Mind Blank</u>	322
<u>Optional Homework</u>	322
<u>22. The Next Step</u>	323
<u>Places for Fellow Tarot Lovers</u>	323
<u>Collecting Tarot Decks</u>	324
<u>Creating Your Own Deck</u>	326
<u>Going Professional</u>	327
<u>A Final Thought</u>	327

[Optional Homework](#) 327

[Further Reading](#) 328

[Appendix 1: The Four Elements](#) 329

[Appendix 2: The Tree of Life](#) 331

[Bibliography](#). 333

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Thanks also to Dan Pelletier for the blunt pencil trick!

A NOTE ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

This Tarot course is designed to enable you, the reader, to study the system of Tarot in a personal and meaningful manner. It is suitable for readers of all levels of experience, as it leads the reader from the very basic skills through to the more advanced topics concerning Tarot. Where possible, the reader is encouraged to progress through the course in order so as not to miss useful information; however, the lessons are designed so that they also have value as stand-alone studies.

The pace at which you study this course is entirely up to you and should be dictated by your other commitments, your level of interest in Tarot, and your own learning style. However, students in the past have found that two to four weeks between lessons has given them plenty of time to complete the optional homework, complete the exercises from the lessons, and explore the themes from each lesson on a personal, deeper level. Ideally, you should only move on to a new lesson when you are happy with your understanding of the previous lesson.

Unlike many Tarot books and courses, I have not given the lessons on the Major Arcana cards in chronological order (from 0, the Fool, to 21, the World). I found that this order, while useful for readings and interpretation, was an unhelpful way of learning the cards themselves, and thus the lessons on the Major Arcana are organized into themes. A set of three (and in one case, four) cards is examined for each theme, serving to highlight this theme as it appears in the cards, show the similarities and differences between the cards, and to offer a means for the reader to explore these abstract concepts. Alongside each set of cards are sections on techniques, skills, symbolism, spreads, and useful tools that fit the theme. Readers may have already noticed that the Major Arcana lessons are interrupted periodically with lessons concerning other topics-reading skills and creating spreads, for instance. This is to allow each reader a chance to not only learn

about the cards but to begin from as early a stage as possible to practice the methods of reading. The optional homework and exercises found throughout the lessons will offer a means for the reader to practice these skills.

The optional homework, activities, and exercises are an integral part of this Tarot course. As suggested by their names, the homework[s] are not necessary, but they are the most effective way for the reader to integrate their newfound knowledge from the lessons into their lives, their individual Tarot practice, and their understanding. The same is true of the activities exercises, which are designed specifically to introduce the concepts or skills in the lessons in a way that aids in the reader's learning of them and eventual understanding of them. This course is not designed to just be read through, and instead puts the power in the hands of the reader to develop a personal relationship with the cards and the system of Tarot. Primarily, this is because I do not want the students of this course to simply parrot words that have been put into their mouths by the lessons. I want the students of this course to make discoveries for themselves, find out new things about their particular Tarot deck, highlight aspects of their own lives and personalities, and begin to create their own understanding and relationship with the cards. When this method of learning is employed, it ceases to be an intellectual chore, and becomes a wonderful, engaging, and encouraging path of discovery and self-development.

At the end of most lessons is a Further Reading list for those who wish to explore that lesson's skills, techniques, or theme further. Each student is encouraged where possible to read widely and explore further than this course.

This course, as with most things in life, will give to you what you put into it. Like learning any new skill, the more effort you put into taking an active role in the learning process the more quickly and effectively you will learn, and the more fun you will have.

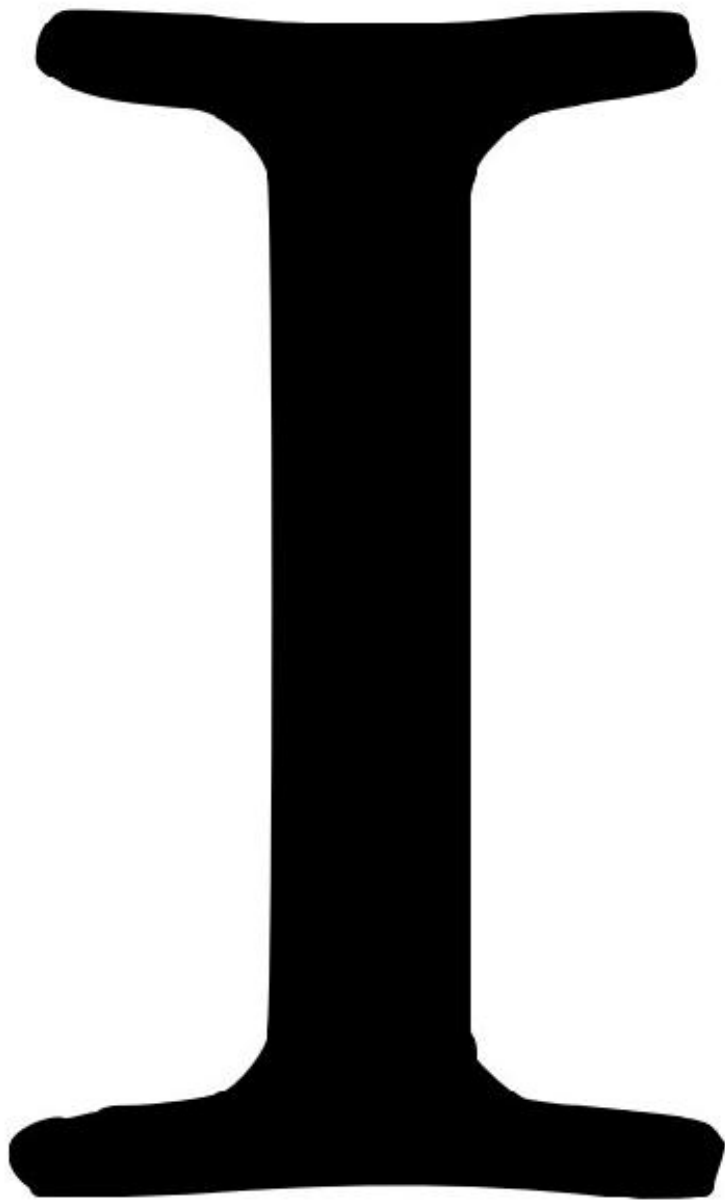
This course is also designed so that it can be studied in pairs or groups of people, and indeed if you can find another interested person to do the

course with you, you will find that you each benefit from the other's perspective, homework notes, ideas, and mistakes. In fact, this course has been taught to groups of upwards of ten people with great effect.

Finally, have fun! The Tarot is a wonderful and versatile tool that will stand you in good stead for years to come, and bring you many enjoyable experiences along the way.

GETTING STARTED

To begin this course, you will need only a willing mind and a notebook. A Tarot deck is useful but not essential until Lesson 3; also at Lesson 3 a Tarot journal will be useful. Once again, the method of using a Tarot journal is encouraged but not necessary; however, the exercises and homework will need a place to be written down and stored for future reference!



INTRODUCTION

What Is Tarot?

A standard Tarot pack consists of seventy-eight cards, split into two distinct sections: the Major Arcana and Minor Arcana ("Arcana" from the Latin for

"Mysteries," therefore "the Greater Mysteries," and "the Lesser Mysteries"). The Major Arcana traditionally contains twenty-two cards, numbered 0-21, and in many modern decks this numbering begins with the Fool and ends with the World (some earlier decks give the Fool as coming after the World, or variously between the last two cards of the Major Arcana). The Minor Arcana is split into four suits, much like a playing deck, with suits of Cups, Coins (Pentacles and Discs are other common names), Swords, and Wands (Rods and Staves are also common.) In each suit there are ten numbered cards (1-10), and four Court Cards: Page, Knight, Queen, King (variations upon these are common in decks.) However, the Tarot deck is greater than the sum of its constituent parts, and as such the question "What is Tarot?" is further explored below.

EXERCISE 1.1

Examine these statements about Tarot, and decide which you agree with most. Either rate them on a scale of 1-10 (1 = I agree wholeheartedly; 10 = I couldn't disagree more!) or place them into three groups: "Closest to my view," "Unsure/not applicable," and "Furthest away from my view."

1. "The Tarot is of intense interest to the occult student because it contains an outline of Initiation..." -Corinne Helene, *The Bible & the Tarot*
2. "...Tarot images offer a framework, guides and mileposts on an otherwise uncharted and therefore frightening journey." -Irene Gad, *Tarot and Individuation*
3. Tarot is a means of foretelling the future.
4. Tarot is a method of assessing the present and the past.
5. Tarot is a skill that requires effort to learn.
6. Tarot is an art form that requires imagination and creativity to use.
7. Tarot is a gift that you are born with.

8. Tarot is a fun way of passing time, entertaining friends, and breaking the ice.
9. Tarot is a profession used to make money.
10. Tarot is a pictorial representation of all the stages of human development and all the experiences shared by humankind.

Now ask yourself why you agree with some statements and why you disagree with others. What does this indicate about your own view of the Tarot and why you want to learn it?

A person could conceivably hold all the above statements as true, but it is likely that you found certain statements to be not applicable to your views rather than completely false. This is because each individual will approach the Tarot with an idea of what they think it is and what they hope to gain from it, and certain perspectives won't figure into that. For instance, you may wish to learn Tarot simply to do readings for yourself-in this case, statement 9 would be true for others (and therefore not false), but not applicable for your purposes.

These statements also highlight a question about whether the Tarot is a skill that can be learned by anybody, whether it is an art form that can be engaged with but not learned intellectually, or whether it is a gift that you must be born with in order to use it. Experience has suggested to me that Tarot is something that can be learned by anybody who wishes it, though Tarot is both a skill and an art form. I have seen many people taught how to use Tarot, suggesting that one isn't born with it at all.

You will also notice that two of the above statements consider Tarot as a form of initiation, or a symbolic and pictorial representation of life's mysteries. This is a widely held view by many Tarot readers, since each card represents an aspect of human experience that may occur in life: birth, death, love, jealousy, hatred, grief, war, triumph, loss, change, balance, crime, friendships, work, family, and more. Many people view the Tarot as a complete microcosm-a miniature representation of this universe.

Finally, statements 9 and 10 hint at a few of the many possible uses of Tarot, from fortune telling to fun and making money. All these ways of using Tarot will be explored throughout the course.

What Can It Do?

EXERCISE 1.2

Before reading ahead, take a few minutes to brainstorm what you think Tarot can do-for yourself and for others. Some examples might include highlighting options, assessing which paths out of a number of possibilities are most beneficial, exploring one's feelings, and playing games.

Many Tarot readers will immediately think of fortune-telling when asked what Tarot can do. However, it is an extremely versatile system of divination that has many other uses besides taking a peek at our futures. Here are some ways Tarot can be used (some more serious than others):

- Foretelling the future
- Examining a person's feelings about a situation or another person
- Highlighting options that were previously unclear or unseen
- Brainstorming a new business plan, project, or concept
- Giving inspiration and new ideas for a creative project
- Creating characters and storylines for fiction writing
- Playing a game
- Breaking the ice at team building events
- Serving as a mnemonic device for remembering other symbolic systems
- Exploring the events of the past and their influences upon the present

- Creating affirmations or rituals for daily spiritual practice
- Forming mental doorways to use for meditation and pathworking
- Offering images for altars, decoration, and gifts
- Exploring one's inner self and current situation
- Making decisions

You will find, as you develop as a Tarot reader, that you use Tarot in certain ways more often than you use it in other ways. This is natural, as your own reasons for learning and using Tarot, your spiritual path, and your way of life will dictate what use the Tarot has for you.

Why Are You Here?

It is important before you begin studying something to understand why you wish to learn about it. Knowing your reasons for doing this course will allow you to be aware of which aspects of Tarot appeal to you most, will allow you to develop your own Tarot reading style and methods of giving a reading, and will enable you to become a proactive creator of your own learning, rather than a passive recipient of information from a book.

EXERCISE 1.3

Take a few minutes to note in a journal your reasons for doing this course. You can be as poetic or as straightforward as you like, but try to think of this exercise as a way of creating a mission statement. Consider what you want to have learned and be able to do by the end of the course. Reflect upon what aspects of Tarot's many uses most appeal to you, and also think back to the statements you agreed with strongly in Exercise 1.1. Keep this "Mission Statement" somewhere you will have access to it every time you begin a new lesson in this course, and return to it every few lessons to check it is still valid. As you go through the course, you may find your ideas changing and

evolving, so be aware that the Mission Statement may require a little revision as your understanding deepens!

Choosing a Tarot Deck

Although owning a Tarot deck for this course is not necessary until Lesson 3, you may find it handy to have one before this so that you can begin to familiarize yourself with the cards and the look of the deck. You will also want to take some care in choosing the right deck for you, so if you start early you are more likely to have the deck you want by Lesson 3.

If you already own a deck, consider how applicable it is to you as a person. A deck may have been given as a gift to you, passed down from one person to another, bought hastily, or simply obtained such a long time ago that the owner has grown out of it. Since your understanding of Tarot will change over time, it is important to be prepared to retire a deck if it no longer fits like it used to. For instance, if you converted from Paganism to Catholicism, you may find that a deck filled with Pagan symbolism, Goddesses, and Gods, is no longer useful to you and that you would prefer a deck with more biblical symbolism or saints in it.

Some people find the perfect deck for them on their first attempt, while others may buy several decks before finding one suitable. This is primarily because being able to view an entire deck before buying is extremely rare—they are kept sealed (and sometimes in locked cabinets) in bookshops, and online reviews will usually only showcase between three to ten cards from the deck. You may find that the only cards you actually liked from the deck were the ones online or on the back of the box, and you find the rest of the deck abhorrent! Owning a few decks is natural, and you may even find that you desire more decks as your studies continue.

When you are shopping for a new Tarot deck, some or all of the following factors should be taken into consideration.

Art Style

Many people are attracted to a deck initially for aesthetic reasons, and indeed you want to enjoy the artwork in front of you while doing a reading. Each person's appreciation of certain art styles is different, and if you want a specific school (impressionist, surrealist, cubist, Pre-Raphaelite) you are likely to find a Tarot deck out there to suit these tastes. If you know simply that you prefer watercolor art to oil paintings, or pencil sketches to stick men, or collages to photography, you also have an idea of what your ideal deck should look like-and once again, you will find plenty of decks out there to suit your preference (yes, there is a Stick Figure Tarot).

However, appearances can be deceiving-the most beautiful deck in the world may in fact be wrong for you, since it may clash with your beliefs, change something in the cards you consider fundamental, be too expensive or too large. After choosing a deck you consider beautiful, also consider the following features.

The "School" It Has Come From

Generally speaking, most Tarot decks descend from a certain tradition or "school" of Tarot, based on a historical and highly influential Tarot deck from history. These are the Rider-Waite-Smith, Crowley-Thoth, and Marseilles traditions. The first is named after the Rider-Waite tarot deck, conceived by Arthur Edward Waite and painted by Pamela Colman Smith in the early 20th century. Although this deck in turn is inspired by the Golden Dawn movement and therefore takes its meanings and much of its symbolism from it, it is the Rider-Waite deck that was widely printed and distributed. In particular, many modern decks copy directly or are inspired by the Rider-Waite's fully illustrated Minor Arcana.

The Crowley-Thoth tradition originated in the 1940s, when Aleister Crowley (another former member of the Golden Dawn) partnered with Lady Frieda Harris to create and paint the Thoth Tarot, a deck that not only contained the systems of Kabbalah and astrology, but also expounded the tenets of Crowley's new religion, Thelema. The Thoth Tarot was not published until 1969, but from then many modern decks took inspiration from Crowley's new perspective on the Major Arcana and the use of a

mixture of Kabbalah, astrology, numerology, and elemental symbolism as a means of expressing card meanings.

The Marseilles tradition developed over a number of centuries in continental Europe from some of the earliest Tarot decks in existence. Most of these decks were printed before the occult revival that gave birth to the Rider-Waite and Thoth decks, and many of them were used for gaming purposes rather than divination. As such, they mostly have non-illustrated "pip" Minor Arcana, making them more difficult for a novice to read.

The Tarot deck you choose can be from any of these schools, but you may find it helpful to own a Marseilles Tarot, the Thoth Tarot, and the Rider-Waite as a means of comparison with any other decks you are using throughout the course.

How Traditional It Is

Some Tarot decks stick rigidly to one of the above traditions, almost to the point of being clones. However, many will change things to varying degrees, depending on the creator's views, perspectives, and understanding of the cards. Remember that Tarot deck creators are individuals like you, and therefore they express their own individual views in their creations. The decks may differ wildly from tradition, having different images, symbols, colors, card titles, order of Major Arcana, and card meanings. Whether you like these changes is up to you, but be aware of them when you choose a deck-these features will be discussed in reviews of Tarot decks online.

Size of the Cards

A little-considered factor in Tarot deck choice is the size of the cards. Most of us are accustomed to shuffling and handling a poker deck, but this is considerably smaller than the average Tarot deck. People with small hands may find a Tarot deck difficult to shuffle without practice. There are some smaller Tarot decks available, and also some larger ones-the larger decks are often easier to read, meaning that little details are clearer and easier to interpret.

The Deck's Theme

Do you like baseball? There's a Tarot deck out there for you. Cat lover? What about a deck with these creatures in it instead of humans? Arthurian legend enthusiast? You'll find plenty of decks that attribute various legends from Camelot to the cards of the Major Arcana. Mythology buff? Marvel comics reader? H. P. Lovecraft fan? Do you want a deck that caters to homosexual men and women? Children? Most decks have some sort of theme, even if it is underlying, and you will often find it helpful to have a deck that explores something you already know. For instance, if you know the characters of Jean Grey or Gambit from the X-Men comics, you will better understand the cards they appear in.

The Deck's Religion

Many decks are created with a specific religion or spiritual path in mind, from Christian decks using scenes from the Bible to convey card meanings, to Druid decks using Druidic symbolism and concepts. There are Hindu decks, Buddhist decks, Pagan decks, Wiccan decks, Catholic decks, and more! Some decks also employ symbolism or teachings from certain religions without being exclusively themed around that religion. If your understanding of the universe is greatly influenced by a religious or spiritual tradition, you might consider a Tarot deck that represents that tradition for you.

Are the Minor Arcana Illustrated?

Some decks do not have illustrated Minor Arcana cards on which there are full scenes that convey meaning. A large number of decks from the Marseilles tradition do not have illustrated Minors but instead use "pips"-cards that depict ten cups in their image instead of a scene showing the meaning of the Ten of Cups. Many beginners find pip cards extremely difficult to read, as the aid of imagery, symbolism, and color is not present.

What Are the Elemental Attributes?

As will be discussed in later lessons, many decks attribute an element to each suit of the Minor Arcana. Some decks differ on which elements they give to which suits, so be sure to get a deck that fits your own view-otherwise you might find your idea of the cards in your reading differs from what the cards themselves are depicting.

What Are the Court Cards Like?

The Court Cards are some of the most difficult cards to learn and develop a relationship with in the pack. A Tarot deck that has evocative and meaningful images in its Court Cards is essential if you have problems with these cards. An image of a king with a sword seated on a throne doesn't convey much meaning, but when you see a checkerboard and chess pieces in front of him, a suit of plate armor, a scowl, and other symbols, you begin to get the picture.

Nudity/Erotica/Body Appearance

For some people, the body and its appearance in the cards is an important factor influencing their choice of Tarot deck. For those who wish to read for children or people who may be easily offended by nudity, it is wise to check that the cards are free from overt nudity (though some cards, such as the Star, traditionally contain mild nudity) or sexual scenes. Conversely, there are decks available for those who want erotica and nudity appearing frequently. Others may be concerned about the body shapes, sizes, and colors appearing in decks, with an increasing number of Tarot readers eschewing the Westernized view of beauty and the tendency for decks to depict only Barbie-doll women and muscular young men. Read reviews of the Tarot decks you are interested in, and look at cards wherever possible to see if the deck contains a more natural view of beauty or not.

Companion Book

Many Tarot decks are accompanied by a large companion book, which gives detailed analysis and explanation of every card with specific reference to that deck. Such books are useful in understanding why the deck creator chose certain images, symbols, and themes, and are ideal for a beginner as

well. However, some decks are only accompanied by a "little white book," which gives basic meanings for cards, but not meanings specific to that deck. A companion book is not as necessary for decks that are close to the Rider-Waite or Thoth, since there are dozens of books written about those decks already. However for a themed deck, the companion book opens up a deeper level of understanding for the reader.

Deck Reviews

Reading reviews of Tarot decks is one of the safest ways to get a better idea of whether a deck you are considering is right for you. A good review will tell you about the physical dimensions of the cards, the art style, whether the deck has a companion book and the contents therein, whether the Minors are illustrated, the order of the Majors, any significant changes made from tradition, and the overall theme (if any). Although a deck review does contain the reviewer's personal opinion, you can usually find multiple reviews of the same deck, giving you a more rounded perspective.

There are a number of websites that publish Tarot deck reviews, and many of them also have articles and information for Tarot enthusiasts. Here are some recommendations:

Aeclectic Tarot (www.aeclectic.net)

Wicce's Tarot Collection (www.wicce.com)

Tarot Passages (www.tarotpassages.com)

Where to Buy

You can buy Tarot decks in many large bookshops in most countries, and in any occult or New Age store. However, shops such as these will only be able to stock a very limited range of decks. If you want more choice (and usually lower prices), purchasing Tarot decks online is the way to go. There are some excellent and highly recommended online Tarot retailers, including:

Tarot Garden (www.tarotgarden.com) offers thousands of decks available worldwide.

Alida (www.alidastore.com) appears in Italian initially, but there are also options available in English. Great for European decks and European buyers.

Tips for Caring for and Storing Your Deck: Spills, Clumping, and Other Accidents

Tarot decks often come in a cardboard box. This box is fine for storing a little-used deck, but if you plan on using your deck frequently or carrying it around with you, you'll quickly discover the box deteriorates. A cardboard box also does little to protect against rain, spillage, and leaks in bags. So you might want to consider keeping a home-based Tarot deck in a sturdy wooden box, a drawer, or a beautiful bag. If carrying the deck with you every day, a waterproof plastic bag around a lightweight wrap or cloth will protect the deck from water and bumps. However, don't be surprised if a well-loved deck ends up obtaining several stains-my reading deck boasts a colorful swirl of wine, beer, juice, biro ink, bashed corners, dirty edges, and perfume.

Over time, you may find that the smooth plastic coating on your cards no longer helps them run smoothly through your hands when you shuffle them. If you find your cards sticking in clumps, a simple solution is to rub a pinch of talcum powder onto both sides of every card with a dry tissue. They will feel extra slippery for a while afterward, but eventually they'll return to their previous smooth shuffle.

You or the person you are reading for might accidentally spill a drink over your cards. With most drinks this can be easily remedied if responded to immediately simply wipe the cards off gently, and place them in a warm place to dry. Afterward, place the deck flat and put heavy books on top of it to flatten it out as the drying process may bend it slightly. Some drinks, such as red wine, may leave a light stain if left too long or if it seeps into the edges-this is untreatable. If the staining is too bad, it might be time to

get a replacement deck. Other drinks, such as orange juice, may leave a sticky residue. The above talcum-powder trick will work wonders after you have dried off the cards thoroughly.

Optional Homework

- Start looking for a suitable Tarot deck if you don't already own one consider your current deck and its suitability for your needs (go back to your "Mission Statement"), and if you want a different deck, start looking!
- In the next lesson, we will explore the nature of symbolism, the language that Tarot speaks in. So, before the next lesson you should (if you have a Tarot deck) pick a card or two that appeals to you, and identify three symbols in it that stand out. If you don't own a Tarot deck yet, find a piece of artwork and do the same. Write a note about this and have it ready when you begin the next lesson.

Further Reading

The New Tarot: Modern Variations of Ancient Images, by Rachel Pollack, looks at how Tarot decks of the last decade have developed traditional Tarot symbolism.



THE LANGUAGE OF TAROT

Tarot Origins: History and Myth in Context

There are many different versions of Tarot's origins, some wilder and more fantastical than others. While it is interesting and fun to learn about the history of Tarot, it does not add much to the reader's ability to give a good reading. Having said this, it can often be helpful-especially when using

certain decks (such as the Marseilles Tarot mentioned previously)-to have an awareness of the origins of the imagery and symbolism in the cards. This allows you to build a clearer picture of the meaning of the card from the perspective of its original painter. This is not as important if you are using a modern Tarot deck which has very little symbolism similar to that found in the older, pre-occult revival decks. However, it is worth being mentioned in this course as it serves to highlight a very simple fact about the human need for symbols.

Although it has now been shown that Tarot's most likely origin is from Renaissance Italy as a game or pictorial memory device, from the 17th century onward, even until the present day, people have posited other origins. These include that the Major Arcana cards are from ancient Egypt and their images can be found inscribed on a long hallway beneath the sphinx, that the Romany gypsies brought Tarot to Europe on their travels, or that the Tarot is one of the last surviving remnants of the mysterious lost continent of Atlantis. Certainly these ideas are far more romantic than the reality! To many people it seems strange that such a complex deck of cards could have developed through a series of coincidences. It is this feeling that stays with us when we endeavor to read the cards: the belief that the random occurrences and happy accidents in life can be interpreted and given meaning. In a similar way, humans have created myths and stories to explain why the sun rises and sets every day, why the Nile turns red annually, why the kangaroo leaps, and why death befalls all life. Thus, it does not seem surprising that even when faced with the historical and archaeological evidence for Tarot's real origins, we still find people clinging to the more romantic theories. The history explains how Tarot came about, but it doesn't explain why it still remains.

This lesson takes a look at the language of Tarot-the way it conveys meaning to us, just as we try to convey Tarot's meaning through myths of its origin, or the world's meaning through stories. This language is almost universal in that anybody can pick up a deck and look at the images to gain an idea of what the card is saying to them. Whether or not that ascribed meaning is the same as somebody else's meaning is beside the point-the

gaining of meaning from the images is important. The Tarot conveys this meaning to us in a language called symbolism.

The Nature of Symbolism

Symbolism can be viewed as a mental process. It occurs when a pictorial representation or thing reminds us of another thing. The thing we are reminded of is the "meaning," and the thing that caused the meaning is the "symbol." Thus, your country's flag can be a symbol representing patriotism, but another country's flag can represent other things. A flag in general can symbolize victory or defeat, joy, parades, and much more. Sometimes the term "symbolism" is applied only to iconic images, and people often attempt to view symbolism as a cross-cultural phenomenon, with many cultures applying the same meaning to the same symbol. This is not always the case, since it is clear that the mind can find meaning in even the most culture-specific images or the least iconic (like an igloo, or a discarded tissue). What is also clear is that things are not just symbols: every image has another function, like representing an apple, or the letter "A." But every image can become a symbol if the viewer looks at it in that way.

EXERCISE 2.1

Take a pad of paper and a pen, and either look out of the nearest window or look around the room you are in. Let your eyes rest on something that stands out-don't change what your eyes have fallen on even if it seems silly or inappropriate! Write down in the center of your piece of paper what that item/image is, and now spend at least three minutes thinking and brainstorming about it.

- What does it look like? What color is it? What shape?
- Does it remind you of something else in your life?
- Does it remind you of a person?
- Does it remind you of a story you may have heard as a child?

- Does it evoke a particular feeling?
- Does it make you think of another item/image?

Now look at your brainstorm. Does anything in particular stand out? The things you have written down are what we call the "meaning" of the symbol. Even if you brainstormed your dog, you may have given him a "meaning" of love, loyalty, or companionship-because of the way he interacts with you and the attention he pays to his master.

Obviously this means that your meaning for "dog" and my meaning may be quite different: I may have been chased by dogs as a child, and therefore now associate them with fear and aggression. This is the nature of symbolism: it does not exist on its own, but only through the eyes of the observer and interpreter. Thus, it is entirely subjective.

EXERCISE 2.2

Find the notes from last lesson's optional homework when you picked a card from the Tarot deck or a piece of artwork and identified three symbols in it. With each of those three symbols or images, do the above brainstorming exercises. When you are finished, compare the symbols' possible meanings. Are they similar? How are they different? Try to see how they may fit together in that Tarot card or that piece of artwork. This is one of the first steps to reading a Tarot card. If you have another person doing this course with you, do this exercise alone but each using the same symbols. Compare notes afterward. Were your meanings similar? Strong similarity is often found between two people who live in the same culture or country, and with certain images that are more iconic than others, such as the sun or night-time. If your meanings were very different, take a look at the brainstorming process and try to see where each of you derived your meaning-you will likely find that it was informed by personal experience.

It is these two factors-personal experience and culture-that are the most important in understanding the nature of symbolism. They inform the meaning of every symbol so strongly that it is almost impossible to ask somebody to analyze a symbol external to their own culture and experience.

This should always be kept in mind when reading, especially when reading for others who may have a very different background or cultural upbringing from you.

The above exercises are excellent for repeated use throughout this course, and anytime in the future. If you ever find yourself stuck in a reading without any idea of what a certain card might mean, take a few of the most prominent symbols and brainstorm them. When you meet a card for the first time, examine its imagery. This is an excellent way to acquaint yourself with its basic meaning.

Learning Tarot Effectively

There are many techniques and methods you can use to make your Tarot learning smooth and keep your later Tarot studies fun and useful. Like the above exercise, all of these techniques should be picked up regularly even when you are years into your Tarot journey. Some of the golden rules of learning Tarot, which you should remember during this course as well as after, are:

- Remember that you can never know everything about Tarot. It is a vast system that can always be added to or understood on another level.
- Every now and then approach the Tarot from a beginner's mind once more, to shake yourself out of old habits.
- There is no destination on the Tarot journey, but the journey itself is paramount. Enjoy it, and don't worry about getting to the end!

The Tarot Journal

The Tarot journal is not only a fun and effective way to learn Tarot, but also to keep a record of your progress, ideas, notes, and discoveries. When studying Tarot, it is helpful to keep all your notes in one place. The Tarot journal is the repository of the wisdom you receive through learning as well as experience and personal insight. If you already have notes from the

previous exercises, you might wish to stick them into a blank journal now (particularly the Mission Statement from the previous lesson) and make this into your new Tarot journal.

Your Tarot journal can be anything: a simple notepad, a beautifully decorated blank book, or a ring-binder. You may find it easier to use a ring-binder, as this allows you to organize notes into sections so you can easily retrieve information at a later date. However, if you are aesthetically driven, you may find yourself more likely to use your journal if it looks nice. You may also be more comfortable with typing than handwriting, and if this is the case there are several useful journal programs you can obtain for a computer. However, a computer program will not be as useful for brainstorming exercises, collages, or your own sketches.

Things you might want to include in your Tarot journal are:

- Card meanings: These can be ones you pick up yourself during readings or that come to you randomly during the day. They can be ones you read in books or on the Internet or meanings others have given to the cards. For this purpose, you may find it helpful to devote a few pages in your journal to each card if you are using a bound book. If you are using a ring-binder, keeping these notes together should be no problem.
- Reflections on the cards: This is an extension of the card meanings, and usually involves scenes from films, sections from books, poems or quotes that seem appropriate to the card and help elucidate its meaning. Did you watch Star Wars and suddenly have an epiphany about how it related to Death? Write it down!
- Readings: If possible, record your readings so you can review them later and see how accurate you were. This is useful not only for judging your skill but also for noting where a card you interpreted slightly incorrectly could have been interpreted differently.
- Daily Draw: (See Exercise 2.4.)

- **Philosophy:** This includes reflections on what you think Tarot is, how it works, its uses, abuses, etc. You will develop this the more you study Tarot and it will be useful for you to write it down just so you can get it clear in your own mind.
- **Correspondences:** These include elemental, astrological, Kabbalistic, alchemical, or any other system of symbolism and how it relates to the cards. As we will see in later lessons, there are lots of other symbolic systems that can be related to the Tarot.
- **Studies of specific decks:** If you have a few decks that you want to learn to use well, consider devoting a section of your journal to each one. This way you can separate your study of the symbolism in decks that may be different in approach.
- **Images that you feel reflect a card meaning particularly well:** These can be taken from magazines or photos and collaged.
- **Spreads:** This includes spreads you create and spreads you find in books, from other readers, and on the Internet. Try to devote a section of your journal to spreads, so that when you need one quickly you can easily find it.
- **Exercises:** Any exercises that you find helpful, such as those in this book, should be recorded so they can be looked back on later.
 - **Deck and book wish lists:** If you have been recommended a particular book but can't get it just yet, why not jot it down in the back of your journal and start a wish list? Then at least you can remember what it was, and you've got a handy list to give to family and friends come your birthday!

The Tarot journal is highly personal, and nobody else ever needs to see it. It can be a useful tool in your development as a Tarot reader, as it gives you a more engaged way of creating your own understanding of the cards. With time, your Tarot journal may even become a book in its own right, serving to guide others along their Tarot journey.

Practice Readings

Practice makes perfect. There is no point during this course at which I will tell you that you now know enough about Tarot to start doing readings. Ideally, you should start now, even if you know nothing about the card meanings. By doing practice readings you are not really aiming to "get the meanings right": instead you are aiming to familiarize yourself with the process of reading the cards. You are learning how to make connections between the symbols in the cards, how to pick out relevant information. You are learning to weave the story into coherence, even if that story is completely inaccurate.

For a practice reading, you can recruit a friend or family member who is sympathetic to your interest. By explaining to them that you need a guinea pig they will be far less judgmental about any lack of experience. However, if you are still nervous about the idea of doing a reading for somebody, there are plenty of other options (so no excuses):

- Read for your cat or dog.
- Read for fictional characters. Ask about how they are feeling at particular points in the story or their motivations. Also ask about the conclusion of the story, even if you already know-you will still be able to analyze the card meanings effectively, and by knowing the conclusion you have a frame of reference to see how the cards interact with the actual truth. I highly recommend anything written by Shakespeare as a fertile ground for characters-drama, twists, motivations, and mysteries.
- Read for yourself.

EXERCISE 2.3

Choose a character from any story, film, play, or fairy tale that you are very familiar with, such as Snow White, Cinderella, Luke Skywalker, Bambi, or Romeo. Now draw a single card from your Tarot deck for this character. Try to see this card as that character-what does the

imagery and scene depict? What feelings are expressed? What action? What symbolism? What does this say about the character you've chosen?

Once again, it does not matter if you have no idea about the card meaning as given in a book or accepted by tradition. What is important is your growing ability to make connections between the card symbolism and imagery, and the thing you are reading about.

Book Learning

In our culture, it is natural to learn a new subject or skill through instruction, and often that instruction comes from a book. With the invention of the printing press came the possibility of masters of arts, crafts, and sciences publishing their expertise for people hundreds of miles away to learn from. This brilliant movement forward in humanity's development is utilized just as much in the Tarot world as in any other, and I highly recommend every Tarot student take advantage of it as much as possible.

You may not be lucky enough to find a reputable Tarot teacher in your area for group learning or one-to-one classes; the teachers you do find may be charging more money than you can afford to pay. If this is the case (and it very often is), a good book on the subject is usually affordable, portable, and approachable. You can dip into it whenever you want, at whatever pace you want, and do as little or as much work as you like.

Many Tarot enthusiasts today scoff at the use of books to gain card meanings, insights, and Tarot wisdom. Many believe that it is just another form of dogma being presented to the student. This view fails to see that the same can be true of inperson Tarot tutors and other means of learning to use the cards. The dogma is not found in the written or spoken word itself, but in the reader/listener's willingness to accept it as absolute truth.

Therefore, I advise you to read as much on the subject as possible from the very beginnings of your Tarot journey. There are several brilliant and knowledgeable Tarot authors from the past few decades who have passed their years of experience on through the written word. While no single work

of an author should be accepted as the only truth, when you read a wide variety of books on the subject you become aware of the varied perspectives and views out there. This allows you to explore all the options, discover new possibilities you may not have thought of on your own, and develop your own understanding of the cards.

However, a complete Tarot education is not found just through Tarot books, but through a wide variety of other literature, such as novels of any kind, the world's classic works, newspapers, magazines, etc. All of these serve to inform our worldview and teach us what it is to be human. The more we learn about the world around us, the environment we are in, and the people we interact with every day, the better our understanding of the concepts depicted in the cards, and the more readily we are able to convey these concepts to others.

What if you're not a big reader, though? That's fine: watch lots of films! Watch documentaries and news programs. Go to museums and galleries. The more you learn about the world around you the better, no matter what media you use.

Exercises for Tarot Learning

The following exercises will aid you in learning more about the card meanings as well as improving your skills as a reader. They teach you to trust your intuition and thoughts on the cards, to rely less on books and more on the cards themselves, and to connect the cards together to form a coherent reading, rather than viewing cards in a reading as isolated events.

EXERCISE 2.4-THE DAILY DRAW

The Daily Draw is a technique that is currently popular in the Tarot community, and used by many people to great effect. The idea is to gain an understanding of each card of the Tarot one by one, and to take note of how each card relates to your daily life. Not every Tarot reader uses this technique; many people don't always have the time to remember to do this! If a Daily Draw is too much, try a weekly draw instead.

You will need some way of recording your Daily Draw results every day, such as a Tarot journal. Every day/week, draw a single card from your Tarot deck. Note in your journal:

- Your first thoughts and impressions of the card
- Any symbols or images that strike you or stand out
- How the card makes you feel

Now analyze that card in relation to your day/week. Some people prefer to do their Daily Draw at the start of their day, in which case they may keep it in mind as they go through the day, picking up what occurrences may be related to that card. Others prefer to perform this at the end of the day, in which case they will simply analyze the card they've drawn based on the previous events. Whenever you do it, write down notes in your journal, including:

- How the card relates to your plans for today or to what has happened today
- How the card relates to the person you wish to be/were today
- How the card might indicate the people in your life today

If you are doing this practice weekly, you can also perform a more in-depth analysis on the card. Try to assess it in terms of physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual aspects: how did it relate to your physical, everyday life? How did it relate to your feelings? How did it indicate your mental state, thoughts, or plans? How did it reflect upon your relationships and community? How did it relate to your inner sense of self?

* EXERCISE 2.5-THE FIVE SENSES

Another method for approaching a card that can be used throughout your learning is that of the Five Senses. This can be used in

conjunction with the Daily Draw, or on a weekly basis, or when a card in a reading confuses you.

Sight: Sit with the card in front of you and begin by looking at it. What can you see? Describe (in your head or out loud, whichever is clearer for you) all the imagery, colors, scenes, facial expressions, symbols, and items in the card.

Hearing: Imagine you are in the scene you have just seen and described. What can you hear in this world? What can you not hear?

Smell: Now try to detect any smells from this landscape. Whether they are pleasant or pungent, desirable or disgusting, let the smells of this card speak to you.

Touch: Now that you have built up a clearer picture of this card try imagining what the card feels like: not just the scenery itself, but what physical feelings it conjures up in your mind. Does it feel rough? Like a warm blanket in winter? Like a refreshing lemonade drink? Fizzy? Squishy? Alternatively, be specific: what do the Empress's robes feel like? What is it like to hold her hand or be embraced by her?

Taste: This can be the best part of the card! What does it taste like? Once again, you can be abstract (it may taste like salt on the sea air, your Mum's roast dinner, blood, tears) or specific (the Nine Cups of ale, the fruit offered to you by the High Priestess).

EXERCISE 2.6-TAROT STORIES

This game is best played with a group of people, but can also be done effectively on your own. It improves your understanding of the card meanings, but also trains you to link the cards together in a reading.

If you are in a group: Each person draws a single card from their own Tarot deck. One by one, you tell a story together, beginning with the words "Once upon a time..." and ending with the words "... and they/ he/she/it lived happily/sadly/not at all ever after." Each card is

another chapter of the story and must continue on from where the previous card left off.

If you are on your own: Draw between five and seven cards from your deck. The above rules apply, but only you are creating the story. The stories you or your group create can be as wacky, serious, emotional, romantic, comic, or tragic as you like, and as you will see, they can change from romance to tragedy to comedy in the turn of a card! If possible, try to perform this game without reference to any books-just look at the card image and tell the story based on what you see there.

A good tip, however, is not to be shallow when telling the story. If the Queen of Cups is the next chapter, try not to resort to: "And then this queen holding a large cup came along..." Instead, consider what the queen looks like, what she's doing; think about how she may be feeling, why she is there, and what this card may mean based on that. Then work it into your chapter of the story! Now, instead of a queen with a cup, she is an emotional counsellor or a beautiful mermaid luring the hero with her siren song.

Myths Surrounding Tarot

You may already have heard many myths and superstitions related to Tarot, and you'll almost certainly be wondering which ones are fact and which are ones fiction. We have already examined something of the Tarot's history, which contains a number of myths that can be considered fiction, but other myths are less easy to label as "fact" or "fiction." This is because often they are based on beliefs or feelings rather than anything objective. Here are some Tarot myths you may have encountered.

Methods of Obtaining a Tarot Deck

Some suggest that only a deck gifted to you will work. I have bought almost all my decks, and I am sure they "work." I find that the idea that the magic is in the physical deck itself rather than in the skill and ability of the Tarot reader leaves no room for improvement. Further, if we all waited to receive

a Tarot deck as a gift before beginning reading, some of us would be waiting forever!

You Must Be Psychic to Be a Tarot Reader/You Are Born with the Gift of Tarot

Obviously, if you believed Tarot is a gift and cannot be learned you wouldn't be reading this book. As to whether you need to be psychic or not, this is a personal belief. I don't think I am psychic. I may be intuitive, and when I use the cards I may be tapping into something beyond myself, but the term "psychic" is a problematic and overly simple explanation of how Tarot works.

Storage and Care of Your Deck

Many people believe you should not let others touch your cards and that they should be stored in a certain way (a black silk cloth, a special bag or box, etc.). This is purely a personal preference. If you believe that your cards work for you because they are linked to your energy through contact, then having others touch your cards may interfere with that contact. If you don't believe this, then having others touch your cards may not be a problem for you. The same applies to the storage of your deck.

Whom You Can/Cannot Read For

It is often said you cannot read for yourself. I have found this to be true insofar as it is difficult to remain objective and clear when reading for yourself, since you are too close to the issue at hand. You may color the reading with bias, or filter it with your desires or fears. However, objectivity can be learned and practised, and sometimes there's nobody else to read for. Others believe they shouldn't read for people they are close to: you may find your objectivity failing if you are particularly close to the person you are reading for.

EXERCISE 2.7

There are many more superstitions and myths about Tarot. Take some time in your journal to note down any myths you have heard, and in particular any superstitions or myths that you adhere to. Now ask yourself why you adhere to them. What purpose do they serve? Are they useful to you? You may discover that you adhere to them only because you were told to. If this is the case, you are free to ditch them. Or you may realize that there is a reason you believe that myth, and that it plays an important role in your use of Tarot. The important thing is that if you hold beliefs about the cards, you should do so on an informed basis, rather than because somebody told you to.

Optional Homework

- The notes you have made from the above exercises may already be in a Tarot journal. Or they may be loose elsewhere. If you don't already have a journal, start one now!
- Based on the beliefs you hold about the Tarot, you can store your deck in a way suitable to you.

Further Reading

A Wicked Pack of Cards: The Origins of the Occult Tarot by Michael Dummett, Thierry Depaulis, and Ronald Decker is an excellent and thorough study of the historical background of the development of the occult Tarot. It's the seminal work on the subject.

A History of the Occult Tarot 1870-1970 by Ronald Decker and Thierry Dummett is a follow-up to A Wicked Pack of Cards, bringing the research up almost to the present day, and charting the Tarot's development in countries such as Britain and America.

Tarot Tells The Tale, by James Ricklef, shows how readings can be done for fictional characters and showcases some excellent readings.

www.trionfi.com is a highly recommended site that contains a wealth of information and continuing research. A little heavy at first if you're a

beginner, but you'll learn a lot very quickly!

www.tarothermit.com is a similar Tarot history research site.

3

THE MAJOR ARCANA:
INTRODUCTION AND

PROGRESS CARDS

This lesson is the first in which we will examine the Major Arcana cards. We will be looking at the chronological order of these cards, but they will be studied instead in groups that have been organized based on common and shared themes.

You will notice as we continue our study of the Majors that I have devoted relatively little space to card meanings. This is because I want to discourage you from simply turning to a page in this book whenever you are doing a reading: it is far more important that you interpret the cards based on the specifics of the reading, spread, question, and your own intuition. As mentioned in the previous lesson, while book learning can be helpful in developing your knowledge and relationship with the cards, it should not be your primary method of interpretation. We will explore the Major Arcana in a way that encourages you to make journal entries, do exercises, and answer questions.

The three cards for this lesson-0 The Fool, I The Magician, and VII The Chariot-all touch upon the theme of progress. They speak of journeys and development of the self. The Fool is the beginner and hero, the Magician the means through which he is given a direction and goal, and the Chariot the journey he undertakes.

The Order of the Majors: Norms and Variants

The Major Arcana is ordered numerically from 0 to 21, usually indicated by Roman numerals. Totalling twenty-two cards, it represents various abstract concepts and important principles in the universe that humankind experiences and interacts with. Most modern decks have the same order of cards for the Majors:

0. 0 The Fool

1. I The Magician

2. II The High Priestess
3. III The Empress
4. IV The Emperor
5. V The Hierophant
6. VI The Lovers
7. VII The Chariot
8. VIII Strength / Justice
9. IX The Hermit
10. X The Wheel of Fortune
11. XI Justice / Strength
12. XII The Hanged Man
13. XIII Death
14. XIV Temperance
15. XV The Devil
16. XVI The Tower
17. XVII The Star
18. XVIII The Moon
19. XIX The Sun
20. XX Judgement
21. XXI The World

This order is often said to tell a story that passes through each of the themes of the Major Arcana in turn, and it is usually the figure of the first card-0 The Fool who is the traveler throughout this adventure, called "The Fool's Journey." However, this traveler can also be seen as representative of each of us as we go through life, or as we go through phases in our lives. The Major Arcana in chronological order can represent any journey, no matter how small or how big, and no matter what level the journey takes place on: physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional.

However, this order found in so many modern Tarot decks is largely arbitrary and did not exist in the earliest decks. (Some of the earliest decks did not have numbered Majors at all, indicating that either their order was memorized by users or there was none.) The order was created over the centuries and changed slightly afterward to fit the occult revival's worldview, and it was also tied in with other symbolic systems such as Kabbalah and astrology. In this way, the modern ordering of the Major Arcana is a tidy organization of the principles of the universe into a microcosmic map.

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With this in mind, it is important to note that you do not have to view the Major Arcana as "The Fool's Journey"; nor do you have to approach it chronologically. While the Fool's Journey can tell us about how each card leads into another, it does not highlight the shared themes, similarities, and differences between the cards. You may also find that the Tarot deck you have chosen has a different order, which better fits that deck's theme. Also be aware that the Fool's Journey is more of a mnemonic device to help you remember the cards-you can have fun with it, play with it, and create your own version.

Ideas of Importance

In a reading, you may sometimes find that most of the cards in front of you are Major Arcana (just as you may find they are mostly Court Cards or mostly Minor Arcana, or mostly Swords). Some people place great importance on this, believing that because the Majors link to abstract, spiritual concepts, a high number of them in a reading indicates that the events or question at hand is extremely important or will prove to be a turning point in the querent's life. This may indeed be the case, and I have often found that large numbers of Majors indicate just this.

However, this view neglects the fact that sometimes the Minor Arcana cards can represent the big issues of life as well. They may relate to the more mundane aspects of life, but they can be just as important and pivotal in our lives as the abstract concepts of the Majors. Please do not fall into the trap of boxing the cards into tidy groups like this-they are already ordered enough into their numbers and suits! Once you begin to over-organize the cards, you'll find your mind sticking to habitual interpretations, causing your readings to become less intuitive and more formulaic and you'll often miss the intuitive spark that you need to get to the key of the reading.

The biggest difference you will find between the Majors, Minors, and Court Cards, however, is that due to the abstract principles in the Majors you may not immediately feel comfortable with them. Perhaps you just can't get your head around the deeper meaning of rebirth in XX Judgement, or perhaps you aren't quite clear on what X The Wheel of Fortune has to say about fate, fortune, and free will. Don't worry, this is natural. To understand such concepts takes time, thought, and experience, and luckily the Tarot's Major Arcana can help you on your quest to find out about them. Naturally, some people will have more experience of nurture than others, and therefore will understand the meaning of III The Empress better. This does not make you a better or worse Tarot reader, just somebody who still has something to learn about the universe. What would life be if we knew everything about it?

Joseph Campbell's Monomyth

What human beings have in common is revealed by myths... -JOSEPH CAMPBELL, *The Power of Myth*

Joseph Campbell was a famous mythologist who spent a lifetime analyzing world mythology for similarities, themes, and differences. His analysis has enabled us to see more clearly the idea that there is a common human experience and a journey that we all make throughout life-this journey comes out in the stories we tell. Campbell studied world mythology, and from his research, created the concept of the monomyth. This is an overarching story in most Western myths (with some slight variations). Campbell said that it demonstrated Western peoples' common needs, desires, fears, and experiences. This monomyth is surprisingly similar to the idea of a "Fool's Journey," and indeed it is often called "The Hero's journey," with a hero undergoing trials and tribulations until he reaches a conclusion:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

-Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

EXERCISE 3.1

Either on your own or with a group, take a large piece of paper and note down some common characters, stereotypes, themes, events, and images that you might find in a blockbuster movie, myth, or fairy tale. Some examples to start you off are damsel in distress, antihero, and crisis.

Now try to organize those things into the order they might occur in a story. Does the hero have an inspiration or impetus to get him started? Where does his crisis occur? Who aids him and when?

Finally, take a look below and read about Campbell's Monomyth, and see if yours was similar. If it was-great minds think alike! You

have touched upon the same themes that Campbell did, indeed the same ones that Tarot readers across the globe tap into every day; and you have discovered a possible "Fool's Journey" to approach the Major Arcana with. If it was quite different, then you have created a "Fool's Journey" that better fits your understanding of journeys and the human condition. Don't let the numbering of the Major Arcana put you off exploring this in the context of the cards! They may have numbers, but they don't have to have meaning only in numerical order and in relation only to the cards immediately preceding and following them.

The Hero's Journey

Campbell's monomyth of the Hero's Journey is split into three sections: Departure, Initiation, and Return.

Departure

1. THE CALL To ADVENTURE. "Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi-you're my only hope." Luke Skywalker receives this message from Princess Leia, and it is the call to adventure that starts him thinking about his origins and a life beyond Tatooine. Other calls to adventure could come in the form of a threat to the peace of the community, or the hero simply falling into it accidentally.

2. REFUSAL OF THE CALL. Many would-be heroes' first response to this call is to refuse to listen: they are scared, or too busy with their current lives to consider leaving. The hero immerses himself in everyday life, trying to ignore the call. (It took Frodo Baggins eleven years after receiving the One Ring before he finally left the Shire.)

3. SUPERNATURAL AID. When the hero finally accepts the adventure he is aided by a figure of authority and wisdom who possesses what appear to be supernatural or extraordinary powers. Obi-Wan Kenobi in Star Wars, Dumbledore in the Harry Potter series, and Morpheus and Trinity in The Matrix are all examples.

4. CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD. Now the hero must move from his current world and way of life to a new one more in keeping with the adventure. The threshold between these two modes is guarded by an entity that can be hostile. Thus, Neo enters the Matrix for the first time and Frodo Baggins leaves the Shire beset by Black Riders.

5. THE BELLY OF THE WHALE. Named after the biblical story of Jonah's tested faith, the hero's passing through the threshold above becomes a form of rebirth through a death-like experience. He becomes renewed and ready to face the new world of the adventure.

Initiation

1. THE ROAD OF TRIALS. Having passed through his rebirth, the hero undergoes a testing period, where he faces a series of obstacles that test his worth. These trials act to teach the hero important lessons and skills, and they are either overseen or secretly aided by the "Supernatural Aid" figure. Thus, Luke Skywalker is taught to trust his feelings with a light saber aboard the Millennium Falcon, and Neo spars with Morpheus in a simulation program.

2. THE MEETING WITH THE GODDESS. The final trial is often depicted as a marriage or partnership between the hero and a mother-like figure. This represents the hero's mastery of life (represented by the feminine) as well as the totality of what can be known. When the hero is female, this becomes a male figure. Thus, Luke first sets eyes upon his sister (and initially, the object of his affections), Princess Leia, and joins her in the Rebel Alliance.

3. WOMAN AS TEMPTRESS / TEMPTATION BY A FALSE PATH. As above, if the hero is female, this temptation would be a man. Here, the hero reflects upon the disunity of his understanding of truth with his experience of the world, represented by a figure of the opposite sex tempting him to a darker path. This temptation towards the "Dark Side" can also be represented by a simple moral dilemma. So Luke Skywalker learns of the Dark Side and its power, and Harry Potter is shown the dark side of

wizarding society in the figures of the Muggle-hating Malfoys and Death Eaters.

4. ATONEMENT WITH THE FATHER Eventually, the hero comes to reconcile the warring aspects of himself that have come to light following his temptation to a false path. This often comes in the form of a father figure that represents the opposing aspect of the hero's self. So Luke Skywalker recognizes that his father is a good man at heart and begins to attempt to bring him back to the Light Side of the Force, and Neo recognizes that his mentor Morpheus's belief that he is The One is right.

5. APOTHEOSIS. The hero's ego is destroyed, leading to an expansion of consciousness. Often the hero's idea of reality is changed, and he may gain new abilities, causing him to sacrifice himself for the greater good. At this point, the hero becomes godlike, usually fulfilling a prophecy. When Neo is killed by Agent Smith, he realizes that death is an illusion.

6. THE ULTIMATE BOON. The hero is given the reward of his adventure—that which he set out to achieve. It may be the princess's hand in marriage, fame, power, spiritual wisdom, or the philosopher's stone. This reward can be taken back to the world he came from and used for its benefit. So Harry Potter destroys a part of Voldemort's soul and saves the school and his friends.

Return

1. REFUSAL OF THE RETURN. Now the hero is called back to the real world, but has found bliss or completion in this new world. He does not want to return. Harry Potter does not want to return to the Muggle world of Privet Drive, and longs to stay in Hogwarts.

2. THE MAGIC FLIGHT. With this refusal comes opposition, and a chase or journey to return the hero back to the world may ensue. The Hogwarts Express shuttles Harry and his friends back home, the Millennium Falcon destroys the TIE fighters chasing Luke when trying to destroy the Death Star, and Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee are rescued by Gandalf's eagles.

3. RESCUE FROM WITHOUT. Closely linked to the Magic Flight, the hero may need to be rescued by a force from his old world.

4. THE CROSSING OF THE RETURN THRESHOLD. The hero must now go back through the threshold he came from, learning to accept his old reality as real and normal once more. Thus, the four hobbits who helped destroy the One Ring, and who have seen so much of the world, return to the Shire and help deliver it from its new evil overlords.

5. MASTER OF Two WORLDS. Having gained so much experience and the Ultimate Boon, the hero may now perceive and live in both the mundane and magical world. He may also bring his new understanding into his everyday life.

6. FREEDOM To LIVE. The hero is finally able to bestow the Ultimate Boon that he sacrificed so much for upon his fellow man. This often appears in a form of freedom for others-freedom from Darth Vader and the Empire, freedom from the rule of Sauron, and freedom from Voldemort and oppression.

Archetypes

Archetypes and stereotypical figures/events that may appear in the Hero's Journey (as well as in the Tarot) include:

Princess, mother, father, sibling, enemy, antihero, shape-shifter, animal companion, descent into the Underworld, loss of friend, femme fatale, joker, sidekick, damsel in distress, labyrinth, gifts, aid, destruction of ego, initial failure, hag, witch/sorceress. All of these figures may have appeared in your above exercise and in the Tarot cards.

There is much more that can be said on the subject of the monomyth and the Major Arcana. I have left this open for your own exploration and discovery, and urge you to look at this lesson often as you go through the book, making links between the Monomyth and the cards you are learning about.

EXERCISE 3.2

Go through the Major Arcana cards. In your Tarot journal, note down which parts of the monomyth each card may most closely apply to. Try to compare this to the other Major Arcana, and see if you can spot any similarities and themes highlighted by this, or any evolution between cards. How do they flow into each other?

0 The Fool

We begin our study of the Majors with the traveler of the Tarot deck: The Fool.

The eternal student, The Fool represents the blank slate upon which the adventure and experience is ready to be written. As the number "0" this card holds the potential from which everything is a possibility: it is the cosmic egg from which all is born. Because possibility is infinite, so the potential of this card is infinite, but this can often manifest in chaos. Unpredictable, difficult to define, the Fool can be seen as a blithely innocent and rash force sweeping into somebody's life, bringing with it new opportunity. This card shakes people out of old habits, awakens them to new ideas, and heralds a time of positive change. It can also remind us that beginner's mind-the act of approaching something with the open, clear mind of a beginner eager to learn-is essential to learning and growth, no matter how much we already know! However, the Fool can also bring with it foolishness, impetuosity, and a tendency to rush in where angels fear to tread.

A tree that can fill the span of a mans arms

Grows from a downy tip; A terrace nine stories high Rises from a handful of earth; A journey of a thousand miles Starts from beneath one's feet.

-LAO Tzu

COMMON SYMBOLS

Sun: Optimism

Mountains: A hard road ahead

Dog or other animal, usually biting the Fool's clothing or body: An animal helper or a nuisance

Butterflies: New beginnings, emergence

Dancing: Joy

Birds flying: Freedom

jester's outfit.- Foolishness, carefree

White rose: Purity

Knapsack: Some baggage the Fool may be carrying, or his resources?

Winding path, crossroads: A journey ahead

Cliff/precipice/danger that the Fool is stepping blindly into: Rashness, naivety, foolhardiness.

KEYWORDS: Potential, chaos, joy, laughter, hope, optimism, idealism, new beginnings, new projects, travel, new journeys, innocence, purity, naivete, foolishness, carefree, careless, childish, childlike, curiosity, spirit, free spirit, leap forward

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: Luke Skywalker from Star Wars, Harry Potter from the Harry Potter series, any hero who starts out as innocent, with an open mind: usually the protagonist.

As A PERSON: In a reading, this card may represent an inexperienced person, somebody new to the path they are treading. They may be trying to do something even though they don't know very much about it. It could also show somebody who rushes into things without first thinking them through. Often this person is also a joker, the life and soul of the party, who will stop

at nothing to get a laugh. Sometimes this lighthearted attitude toward life holds this person back.

EXERCISE 3.3

- Take the Fool card from your deck. In your Tarot journal, write "Fool" in the center of a page. Spend a few minutes brainstorming the title of this card. What does it remind you of? What does a "fool" mean to you? What images does the word conjure up in your mind?
- On another journal page, note down what you see in the card image—the symbols, colors, people, and creatures in it. What do they represent to you? What do they suggest about the card?
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.

Questions for Journaling

- Where does my potential lie?
- Do I allow my potential to become actual?
- How naive/trusting am I?
- Does this card scare me, or does it evoke positive feelings in me?
- When have I rushed into something without thought?
- What experience have I had recently with new beginnings, learning something new, and "beginner's mind"?
- If the Fool were a person I know, who would it be?
- Is the Fool aware of the dangers before him in the card (if there are any)?
- Is the Fool purposefully moving towards the danger? If he is, what implications does this have?

- What happens when he does reach the danger?
- What led him to this point?

I The Magician

Our study of the Major Arcana continues with the Magician, representative of the force and direction that gives the Fool a goal, as well as the resources the traveler has at his disposal.

This first card of the Major Arcana is symbolized by the number "1," a number signifying the sense of self, ego, "I," and "I am." The Magician is the direction of the energy from the Fool's chaos and potential-he points his magic wand and the energy streams through it, guided to the Magician's goal in the world. He uses energy, talent, skill, personality, and the world around him as a resource to be tapped into. This card represents the focused application of will and energy toward an achievement, just as the Magician directs his energy through his wand to create magic. This card also represents the active principle of the universe that causes change and manifestation to occur. Often, the Magician can be seen as the first divine spark that starts the creative process or puts you on the path toward manifestation. However in older decks the Magician was named "Le Bateleur" ("The Juggler") and he was a street conjuror and con artist, performing tricks for passersby and using his skill to make money. Beware the Magician when in a negative light: he has a few tricks up his sleeve, and his sleight of hand may procure his resources in a less than desirable fashion.

As above, so below.

Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will

-ALEISTER CROWLEY

COMMON SYMBOLS

Wand: Power, will, direction, energy, active masculine.

Red and white roses: An alchemical symbol of masculine (active) and feminine (passive), the interaction of which creates energy.

One arm raised to the sky and one pointing downward to the earth: The act of raising one arm to the heavens is symbolic of receiving the energy from above ("As above...") and transferring it through one's body to the down-pointing arm ("So below..."), allowing the energy to become manifest in the world.

A table upon which is a dice cup, sword, cup, disc: The items on the magician's table often represent his resources-usually the four elements in the context of the Tarot suits.

Lemniscate (infinity symbol): Infinite possibility.

KEYWORDS: Power, energy, direction, focus, will, goal, drive, magic, manifestation, resources, resourcefulness, dynamic, action, active, cunning, sleight of hand, trickery, spirit descending into matter

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." (NIV Bible, Gen. 1:1-3.) God's creation of the world shows the principle of the Magician in action.

The magician Gwydion from the Welsh Mabinogion also demonstrates this card: he uses cunning, magic, and resources around him (such as the flowers of the earth) to give his son what his mother had denied him. Although what he does is trickery against his son's mother, he uses his will and energy to make manifest his wishes.

AS A PERSON: This card could represent somebody who is highly skilled at what they do and knows it! They are successful, professional, highly communicative, and resourceful, and they know how to get things going

and how to keep things moving. If something needs doing, this is the person to do it. Highly resourceful, they have a tendency to know the right people, best places, and the tricks of the trade. However, their ego is just as great as their skill, and a "me, me, me" attitude will often prevail. Negatively, this card can show somebody who cannot be trusted: a devious, cunning, sly person with plenty of tricks up their sleeve!

EXERCISE 3.4

- Using a blank Tarot journal page, spend a few minutes brainstorming the number "1." What does this suggest about this card?
- Sit with your deck's Magician card in front of you. Spend some time examining the card and writing down every symbol you find in it. Now think about what these symbols mean to you, and what they might mean in the context of the card.
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.
- Read Definitions and Theorems of Magic (see Further Reading below) and ask yourself how this relates to the Magician's use of resources and process of enacting his will.

Questions for Journaling

- Where and what are my resources? How do I access them?
- How do I apply my will and energy every day?
- How focused am I? How ambition-driven am I?
- What are my long-term goals? Do I know how I will achieve them?
- How do I move from the beginning of a project or journey to the completion of my goal?
- Do I have an action plan? How organized am I?

- What does "I" mean to me? Who am "I?"
- How do I feel about this card?

VII The Chariot

The final card we visit this lesson is VII The Chariot, the archetypal quest and journey that a hero travels.

Progress is inevitable and should be welcomed, and the journeys that we travel as we go through life are many and varied. There are little journeys (like catching the bus to work) and there are big journeys (like traveling overseas). There are also journeys that do not take place on a physical level but rather on an emotional, mental, or spiritual one (like moving from an old relationship to a new one, undertaking an university education, writing an essay, undergoing a spiritual transition, or moving from grief to acceptance). The Chariot is the quintessential quest and journey-it is Campbell's monomyth and it is the Fool's Journey. Depicting a moving vehicle, this card can be seen as movement forwards and away from.

Victory belongs to the most persevering.

-NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

The rung of a ladder was never meant to rest upon, but only to hold a man's foot long enough to enable him to put the other somewhat higher.

-THOMAS HENRY HURLEY

Plato described the soul as a chariot drawn by two horses, one black and one white. The white horse is noble and the black horse ignoble, thus they both pull in different directions, causing problems for the charioteer. Plato's allegory also details the soul's plight: the soul aims to rise and evolve, but loses its ability to progress easily. This ability is only regained after a long journey, sometimes taking a lifetime, sometimes taking many (Phaedrus, 245c-254e). One might consider that if the charioteer were only to control

the horses so that they pulled in the same direction, progress would be quicker and smoother.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Chariot: The soul, the self.

Horses: Sometimes two, black and white; sometimes four, for each of the four elements.

Armor: The charioteer is ready and willing to fight for his goals.

Laurel wreath: Victory.

Road.- The path traveled and the one about to be taken.

City: Usually behind the charioteer, in the distance, signifying a journey that takes you away from the past and normalcy into something else.

Scepter. Oower, command.

Barnacles: Upon the charioteer's armor there may be barnacles, signifying his astrological association with Cancer.

Sphinx: Sometimes sphinxes draw the charioteer's vehicle. In legend this creature would not allow a traveler to pass without answering a riddle. The charioteer having control over these creatures symbolizes his control over his mental capacity.

KEYWORDS: Progress, journey, quest, evolution, movement, action, swiftness, triumph, victory, ambition, control, travel, search, goal, enthusiasm, promotion, pilgrimage

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: If the Chariot is the quintessential journey, then the quest for the Holy Grail epitomizes this card. The Grail itself was said to be unattainable by anybody not wholly pure and innocent, and indeed only a few knights (depending on which account you read) caught a glimpse of the Grail on their quest. However, in the Grail stories more

attention is given to the journey than to the final attainment: it is the journey itself that can be seen as the Grail, since it purifies and sanctifies the questing knights through challenges, trials, and evolution.

As A PERSON: The Chariot often signifies somebody who is always active, continually striving toward a goal, setting their goalposts even farther away. It seems that this person is never happy with actually achieving their end: instead they just move on to the next journey, the next adventure. A Chariot person has a sense of urgency about them and they demand immediate results, growing impatient with those who cannot keep up. Negatively, a Chariot person can be ambitious to the extreme, treading on toes and stopping at nothing to achieve their goal.

EXERCISE 3.5

Take a blank page in your Tarot journal, and draw a basic chariot. This chariot must have the cart, the charioteer, wheels, the road ahead, and the animals pulling it. Now identify the following aspects of your life with each part of the chariot.

- The road ahead represents the journey you are on. What major journey are you on at this time of your life?
- The charioteer is you. What role do you play in this journey? How in control are you? How do you push yourself forward?
- The cart is your support on your journey. What carries you through? What gives you the strength to continue?
- The animals are the forces that pull you onward. What keeps you going? What drives you? What gives you energy?
- The wheels are the perpetual motion that flows. What aspect of your journey is easy and has its own life? What can you rely on to keep going even when you feel you cannot?

Questions for Journaling

Answer the following questions in your Tarot journal, with your deck's Chariot card in front of you.

- What quest am I on currently? What quests have I undertaken in the past?
- How do I approach a new challenge?
- What drives me forward and keeps me moving? Do I have continuous momentum in my life?
- How quickly am I making progress?
- What do the beasts pulling the chariot suggest to me?
- Where has the charioteer come from, and where is he going?
- What do victory and triumph mean to me? When did I last experience them?

Optional Homework

- Look at your deck's order of the Major Arcana. Does it differ from the traditional order? How? Does the creator give any reasons? How do you feel about this?
- Look at the Major Arcana in order, and in your Tarot journal try to see how the Fool moves through each of the cards. Even if this is done in a basic fashion, identifying how the Fool might change as he progresses will form the basis of a deeper understanding later.

Further Reading

Plato's Chariot Allegory (<http://www.John-uebersax.com/plato/plato3.htm>)

Crowley's Magick in Theory and Practice (<http://hermetic.com/crowley/book-4/defs.html>). Read "Definitions and Theorems of Magick" for further study of the Magician card.

Tarot and the journey of the Hero, by Hajo Banzhaf, for the Fool's Journey.

The Power of Myth, by Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, for more on the archetypes of the mythical journey.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces, by Joseph Campbell, for the Monomyth and other theories.

4

THE MAJOR ARCANA:
FEMININE ARCHETYPES

The cards that we explore in this lesson are grouped together because each portrays a powerful aspect of the Archetypal Feminine that appears in the Tarot. II The High Priestess, III The Empress, and XVII The Star will be studied in relation to mythical archetypes of the Goddess in her many forms (whom we briefly saw in Campbell's monomyth in Lesson 3). We will also explore a concept traditionally associated with the Divine Feminine but which is not exclusive to women-intuition. The development and use of intuition is a vital part of any Tarot reader's skill and should be continually improved.

Gender in the Cards

It must be noted that the terms "Divine Feminine," "Archetypal Feminine," or "Goddess" are merely terms that identify figures traditionally portrayed as women in mythology. The fact that they are female in form is another symbol that the myth itself uses to express traits and attributes: "female" is traditionally associated with certain traits, such as passivity, nurture, creativity, and intuition. However, it should always be remembered that this female form in a story or myth is very different from women in the real world, just as the male form in myth is different from real men. Not all women are passive, nurturing, creative, and intuitive. Not all men are aggressive, logical, and controlling. When a female or male figure appears in the cards, it is not to indicate physical gender, but rather the traits commonly associated with masculine and feminine.

EXERCISE 4.1

On a blank page in your Tarot journal, spend a few minutes noting down some traits, activities, and attributes commonly associated with the terms "masculine" and "feminine." If possible, pair these traits so that they reflect opposites or mutual pairings (such as "active" and "passive," "creative" and "destructive"). Now, taking out the Major Arcana, set aside into one pile all cards that predominantly show a male figure, and into a second pile all cards that predominantly show a woman, and finally into a third pile all cards that show both genders or are unclear as to the figure's gender. Ask yourself the following questions.

- Why did the creator choose this gender for the card?
- Which traits in your list look appropriate for this card? Do they match the gender of the card?
- What does this gender in the card indicate for the basic meaning of the card-is it an active card, expressing itself in outward actions (masculine), or is it a receptive card, receiving and adapting to influence from external forces (feminine)?
- Why do some cards have more than one gender in them? Why are some cards unclear?

Maiden, Mother, Crone, Whore, and Other Feminine Archetypes

Robert Graves, Joseph Campbell, and Carl Jung have all posited in different ways that the side of the sacred that is "feminine" (and expressed in mythology in female form) can be organized into various categories called Archetypes. In *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves writes about the existence of a Triple Goddess-Maiden, Mother, and Crone-that was worshipped by early man, and although his historical sources and accuracy are dubious (he viewed poetic inspiration as a valid historical methodology) his meaning and the mythical understanding are clear. The concept of Maiden, Mother, and Crone can be worked with as a model in relation to the three Major Arcana cards we are discussing in this lesson, bearing in mind that the feminine form is just another symbol used in Tarot imagery. In this model

Maiden = XVII The Star, waxing moon, rejuvenation, youth, hope

Mother = III The Empress, full moon, nurture, creativity, growth

Crone = II The High Priestess, waning moon, wisdom, mystery, introversion

The Maiden (Star) is ever-young, beholden to nobody but herself. She represents continual renewal, since she is ever-virgin. Her youth and vitality

bring hope, optimism, and healing. The Mother (Empress) is the bringer of life, maker of manifestation, the creative urge within us all. The Crone (High Priestess) is the inner wisdom and self knowledge attained after experience, the introversion necessary to receive that wisdom, and the mystery that we all face until we have reached this point ourselves.

Carl Jung's view of the Divine Feminine (as the anima found in every man's soul) is fourfold rather than threefold, and expressed in four major female figures from world mythology: Eve, Helen, Mary, and Sophia/Athena. This fourfold view adds a fourth face to the Goddess found between the Maiden and the Mother, thus:

Maiden = XVII The Star (Eve)

Seductress = VIII Strength (Helen)

Mother = III The Empress (Mary, mother of Jesus)

Crone = II High Priestess (Sophia)

Strength (otherwise called "Lust" in the Crowley-Thoth tarot) will be explored further in a later lesson, but the image of a woman taming a lion-Beauty and the Beast-is a poignant one for the seduction of the Divine Hero by the Divine Feminine. It is also tempting to apply the above fourfold view to the four elements and four suits of the Tarot.

EXERCISE 4.2

How would you relate the four elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water to this fourfold view of the Divine Feminine? How does this relate to the four cards above? What does it say about their basic meanings? The four elements and their relation to the Tarot will be further examined in Lesson 6.

Other archetypes of the Divine Feminine have been commented upon by Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, and others. These archetypes appear so frequently in mythology, fairy tales, films, and literature that they become

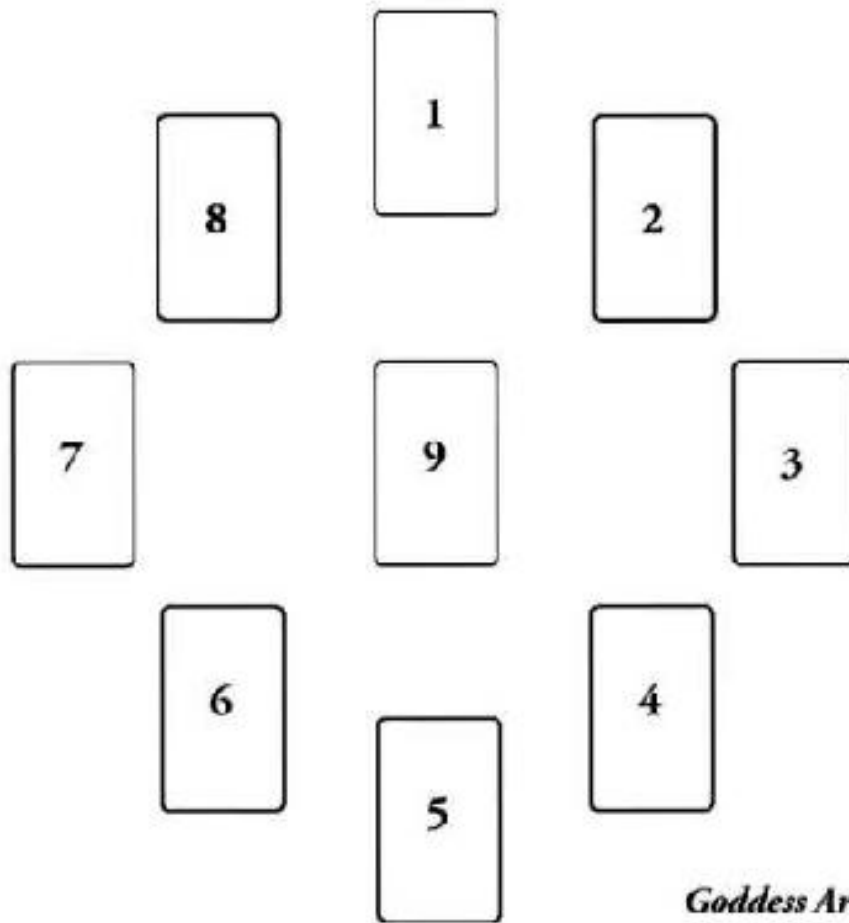
part of the framework of each story. In the same way, they can be seen as part of the framework of the Tarot.

EXERCISE 4.3

Spend a few minutes noting down some stereotypical (archetypical!) female figures from myth, film, and literature. To get you started: temptress, sorceress, and princess. Consider what role they may play in somebody's life, both on an everyday and pivotal level. Keep this list somewhere accessible so that as we go through the rest of the cards you might be able to see where these archetypes fit into the Tarot.

Goddess Archetype Spread

This is a fun way of exploring the feminine archetypes in the Tarot, world mythology, and within yourself-regardless of your gender. I encourage you to do this spread even if you are still shy about interpreting the cards: the sooner you begin to get used to the process of reading, the sooner you will improve. If you have to use a book to give yourself a head start on the meanings feel free, but try your best to interpret the card images intuitively. If necessary, go back to previous Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 for help working with a particular card.



Goddess Archetype Spread

Card 1. Mother: What do you nurture? How do you create?

Card 2. Virgin: What is a mystery to you? How do you celebrate your image?

Card 3. Siren: What attracts others to you? How can you celebrate your sexuality?

Card 4. Sorceress: What do you control and manipulate? How can you change your life?

Card 5. Wise woman: What do you know deeply? How can you share your knowledge?

Card 6. Fairy Godmother: What gifts can you give to the world and others? How do others approach you?

Card 7. Wife: What are you married to? How do you devote yourself to things?

Card 8. Hag: What in you is ugly and terrifying? How can you redeem this monster?

Card 9. Amazon: What would you fight for? How can you develop your courage and determination?

II The High Priestess

With her inner wisdom, sense of mystery, secrecy, and intuition, the High Priestess holds the same keys to the inner world as the Crone archetype of the Feminine Divine.

The High Priestess comes closest to defining the means by which a Tarot reader receives insights and interpretations of the cards in a reading. She is often seen as the opposite principle to that of the active, masculine Magician: she is the passive, receptive "feminine." Whereas knowledge is prized in today's world, this card represents the inner knowledge that comes through experience and understanding rather than book learning. In this sense, the High Priestess is the companion of the High Priest (the Hierophant): she represents gaining wisdom through intuition and inner processes, while he represents gaining knowledge through learning from others and tradition. Both learning processes are necessary.

The greatest thing man can experience is the mystery.

-ALBERT EINSTEIN

The High Priestess is the silence of true wisdom, and the ability to truly listen to others and the world around instead of trying to think of an answer. She is the gap or pause in a sentence, conversation, and piece of music. She is also traditionally seen as guarding the exit or entrance of the Temple of Solomon, thus she is a guardian of the threshold of initiation, the doorway through which we pass to approach our inner, silent core of understanding.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Torah: The High Priestess may hold a scroll in her hands, often with "Torah" written upon it. The scroll is closed, indicating no need for the written wisdom.

Water: A symbol of the passive, receptive feminine, and of the flow of intuition.

Veil: The High Priestess often sits before a veil. What lies behind is a mystery.

Pillars: Usually one black, one white, with the English or Hebrew letters for "B" and "J" on each one. These are the pillars of Boaz and Joachim, the pillars that stand either side of the doorway to the biblical Temple of Solomon. The RiderWaite image, however, suggests that the High Priestess is seated on the inside of the temple, guarding the exit: she is an initiator, a threshold guardian.

Pomegranates: A symbol of knowledge of the inner, darker, more mysterious self, following the myth of Persephone's descent into the Underworld.

Crescent Moon: Another feminine, passive symbol. The moon only gains its light as a reflection from the sun.

Crown of Isis: Magic, knowledge, wisdom.

Equal-armed cross: Balance, four elements, peace.

Camel: Indicative of the Hebrew letter associated with this card.

Night: Mystery, secrets, silence.

KEYWORDS: Intuition, mystery, secrecy, silence, receptive, passive, feminine, flow, inner wisdom, introspection, observation, reflection, peace, calm, understanding, meditation, occult, psychic

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: Possibly due to the passive, quiet nature of this card, characters from books and films who represent the High Priestess rarely come to the forefront of the story. However, the climax of the film *Pi* sees the hero finally destroy his need for book-learned intelligence and give in to a personal, inner, silent experience. We might also see the Oracle from the Matrix trilogy in this card, with her ability to know the secret heart of every person, understand the flow of the ever-changing future, and receive messages.

AS A PERSON: The High Priestess represents a person, regardless of gender, who is quiet, retiring, and wise. They have an ability to "just know" things they could not know through normal means. They may have an uncanny knack of knowing how others feel or think, finishing sentences for others, or coming out with gems of wisdom in everyday conversation, sometimes without meaning to. They are good listeners, calm, and open to all ideas. They soak up knowledge like a sponge, and find joy in libraries, books, and studies, particularly occultism, religion, and spirituality. Highly intuitive, they may be a Tarot reader, medium, or spiritualist.

* EXERCISE 4.4

- Taking the High Priestess from your deck, identify any symbols that strike you. Are they different from the ones listed above? What do you think they mean?
- Spend a few minutes brainstorming the words "Intuition," "Silence," and "Receptive." What have you come up with? How does this relate to the High Priestess?
- You can use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.
- Read *Thunder, Perfect Mind* (see Further Reading below) and reflect on how this text expresses the concept of wisdom and silence.

Questions for Journaling

- How often do I find my own answers, rather than listening to those of others?
- Do I fear the unknown and hidden?
- How developed is my intuition? Do I use it often and well? Do I trust it?
- How do I absorb information?
- What does my inner self want? What voice does it speak with?
- What is written in the scroll the priestess holds?
- What is she doing in front of the veil? If I were to pass through, what would I find?
- Are there any myths, stories, legends, or figures from literature, history, folklore, or myth that exemplify the card's meanings?

Developing Your Intuition

You don't need to be psychic or clairvoyant to read Tarot. If you are psychic or clairvoyant, then you may not need the cards at all to give readings, but these are very different readings from a Tarot reading. Being psychic is not better than being a Tarot reader-it's just a different process. So don't worry if you feel that, like me, you're about as psychic as a lamppost: all you need is intuition.

Being intuitive is not the same as being psychic or clairvoyant. The latter two are focused on predicting what might happen in the future, whereas intuition is about seeing and identifying patterns in the everyday world around us. Thus, intuition is an essential tool for Tarot readers, psychics, and clairvoyants, as it is the medium through which we receive the symbols and messages that need to be interpreted or predicted. The High Priestess teaches us some of the main components needed to open our intuitive capabilities: silence, receptivity, and introspection. Intuition does not come from somebody else's knowledge or from an encyclopedia, but from the inner

dialogue you have between yourself and the patterns you discover in the world around you.

The exercises below are designed to help you develop your intuition and enable you to listen to it and trust it in your Tarot readings.

EXERCISE 4.5-HOW THE STICKS FALL

Take several sticks-lollipop sticks, coffee stirrers, twigs, anything long and thin! Hold them in your hand and then toss them gently to the ground. How have they fallen? What shapes have they formed on the floor? What do the shapes mean to you? The sticks should be unmarked, as it is the pattern they make that is important.

EXERCISE 4.6-HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

Children throughout the world have given their intuition a boost with this exercise. To do it, you'll need a warm, slightly breezy day, a soft patch of ground, and a friend. Lie on your backs and look at the clouds in the sky, and challenge each other to find the most elaborate shapes and images in the clouds.

EXERCISE 4.7-BOOKWORM

Go to the nearest bookshelf and pull out a book at random. Open it to a random page, and let your eyes rest on a random sentence. Read it aloud, and try to guess what it might mean on a different level. Ask yourself, if a wise Chinese sage were to preface this sentence with "Confucius says..." what that would mean on a deep, spiritual level!

* EXERCISE 4.8-FLAMING RED

Light a candle, or watch a bonfire or hearth fire, and note how the flame moves. In what directions does it move? How does it move? How high does it burn? Does it crackle, pop, or hiss? Look into the embers if you have a hearth/bonfire, and see the images the hot coals make as they

heat and cool. Let your eyes relax and just watch, and images will come to your mind.

III The Empress

Full of creative potential and abundance, we come to this card with thoughts of the Mother archetype in mythology and our own lives.

Deep down, within the core of our being, lies a creative power, the capacity to create what is to be, and the urge to make unremitting efforts until we have given it shape in one way or another, either outside ourselves, or within our own person.

-J. W. VON GOETHE

If any card represents mankind's ability and urge to create beyond need and imagine beyond necessity, it is the Empress. She is the process of creativity, the mother of our dreams and imagination, and the nurturer of our vitality and abundance of life. She is the doorway through which new things come into being. The artist, poet, author, and composer will be familiar with her as the process whereby ideas become reality.

The Empress can also be seen as the fertile Earth Mother, or the source of our ideas and creativity: the font of life that nurtures us as we grow and evolve, the force that recreates us and the universe every single second. She is fertility in all areas of life, as well as the luxurious overflow of resources, feelings, emotions, love, desirability, and care. The Empress shows us universal love, and we long to fall into her all-embracing bosom.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Venus: The astrological sign for Venus (also the symbol for any female of a species) indicates sexuality, sensuality, and love. It also shows that the Empress is the active feminine principle, as opposed to the High Priestess who is the passive feminine. The Empress actively creates and nurtures.

Swans: Birds that are said to mate for life, symbolizing love. Also a heraldic symbol in older decks.

River: Natural flow of life, water of life.

Fruit: Fruits of one's labor, completion of creative process.

Hearts: Another symbol of love and sensuality.

Corn: Harvest, produce.

Cushions, rugs: Luxury, relaxation.

Pomegranates: Fertility.

Pregnancy: An obvious symbol of the creative process, and one that emphasizes the fact that creativity involves full effort and hard work on the part of the creator.

Bees: Activity, sweetness, busyness, production.

Breastfeeding: Nurture, care.

Moon: Link to the feminine.

Starry crown: Usually a crown of twelve stars, indicating the zodiac and therefore the cyclical nature of creativity, as well as the long time creation can take.

KEYWORDS: Life, love, vitality, fertility, virility, fecundity, new beginnings, creativity, creative process, nurture, care, protection, harvest, hard work, sacrifice, birth, busyness, skills, ripening, abundance, prosperity

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: In the Harry Potter series, the character of Mrs. Weasley expresses the mothering and the smothering aspects of this card. Not only does she love and nurture her own large family, she also does so for Harry and other characters. She has a seemingly endless capacity for

love and attention toward others' needs, but sometimes those closest to her (such as her youngest son, Ron) feel smothered by her affection.

As A PERSON: Down to earth, sensual, creative, and with a boundless affection and love for others, the person signified by the Empress knows how to manifest dreams into reality. They care about the needs and feelings of others, but this can sometimes lead to them forgetting their own needs. They are intensely imaginative, with an urge to create, and they are always learning new crafts, hobbies, and creative skills. This person can also be broody, with a love of children and family.

* EXERCISE 4.9

- In your Tarot journal spend a few minutes writing about your experiences of mothers, mothering, and nurture. What people have fulfilled these roles for you? How have you done these things? How do they make you feel? Relate this back to the Empress card.
- Identify some experiences you've had with creativity and the creative process. What started it? How did it expand? How did it end? What was produced? How did this feel?
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What do I create in my life?
- How creative am I?
- What have I created in the past?
- Do I nurture others, myself? How do I do this? Does my "mothering" verge on "smothering"?
- How often do I see projects through to completion and fruition?
- When was the last time I saw the fruits of my labors?

- Where else do the river, moon, and pomegranate symbol appear in cards in my deck? Does this link the cards in any way, and how?
- Are there any people in my life that represent the Empress to me?
- What negative aspects could be applied to this card?

XVII The Star

As a card of healing and rejuvenation, as well as youthful optimism and hope, the Star is most fitting as the Maiden aspect of the Divine Feminine.

The starry night sky is beautiful to behold, and this card comes in the Major Arcana after two extremely difficult and dark cards: XV The Devil and XVI The Tower. Thus, the Star acts like a beacon of hope shining in the darkness, promising renewal, healing, rejuvenation, and the release of energy. It is a card of optimism, wishes, and high ideals—we look for shooting stars to wish upon, refer to celebrities as "stars," and reward children's best efforts with gold star stickers. The quote above, from Liber Al vel Legis (The Book of the Law), highlights the divine nature that all human beings share, and it is this we also see in the Star card: a recognition of our highest abilities as participants in the joy and miracle of incarnation. It is a call away from the bestial and banal activities we sometimes find humankind reveling in, and a reminder of what great things we are capable of, if we only put our minds to it and think beyond this world.

Every man and every woman is a star.

-Liber Al vel Legis

As the springs return—regardless of time or man—so does hope!
Sometimes but a tiny bud has to push up through the hard shell of
circumstance to reach the light of accomplishment. Do not give up
hope!

-DOROTHY MILLER COLE

For centuries, man has used the stars to navigate the world and discover new places. He has also created stories about the constellations, and predicted the future upon their omens. Thus, this card represents the realization of our highest purpose and the direction of our spiritual lives.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Stars: Wishes, ambitions, guidance, light, hope, realization, inspiration.

Water: Flow, life, energy, healing, renewal, also the subconscious or consciousness.

Pouring water: Healing, removing blockages, cleansing.

Naked woman: The bare essentials of the self, also comfort with self and freedom from external trappings.

Bennu Bird (Egyptian phoenix): Used in Catholic imagery as a symbol of Christ's resurrection, and the immortality of the soul. Another symbol of renewal and rejuvenation, and certainly one on a more spiritual level. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, this bird is closely associated with the sun rising out of the Underworld each night, and thus the God Ra, sometimes called "Lord of Jubilees."

One foot in water, one on land: This symbol is found elsewhere in the Major Arcana, and can be seen as symbolizing the act of living in both the everyday and spiritual world.

Aquarius: The figure in this card is often in the pose of the zodiac sign of Aquarius: the water bearer pouring water from two jugs into a pool. Aquarius is the zodiac sign of new awareness, the New Age, idealism, and hope.

Night: Often this card is set at night when the stars are clearly visible. Sometimes it has to be very dark for us to see the brightest lights.

KEYWORDS: Healing, hope, rejuvenation, spirituality, new life, reflection, recuperation, release, guidance, light in the darkness, optimism, luck, good

fortune, blessing, wishes, success, recognition of divinity

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: In most stories, you will find the Star card as an opportunity for the protagonist to experience the calm after the storm, and heal the wounds and hurts they have suffered. It is also a guiding light, so the light of Earendil that Samwise Gamgee and Frodo Baggins are given by Galadriel in *The Two Towers* which later provides light in a dark place-is a good analogy. There is also a Native American Iroquois myth of how the land was burned by an evil fire spirit, until the Eagle spirit Oshadagea flew across the land carrying an ocean on its back, dousing the fires and renewing the parched earth.

As A PERSON: The Star person is a joy to know! They may have their head in the clouds a lot of the time, but they are a shining light in everybody's lives. Constantly optimistic no matter what faces them, they dream and hope and make wishes almost compulsively. They may be interested in spirituality and the New Age, always looking for new ideas and ways of thinking. Extremely open minded, the Star person embraces everything that comes their way which, given their sometimes innocent and naive belief that everybody else in the world is as optimistic and well-meaning as themselves, can sometimes give people an opportunity to take advantage of them.

* EXERCISE 4.10

- In your Tarot Journal, brainstorm "Star." What associations do you have for stars? What comes to your mind when you think of them? How does this relate to the card?
- What other cards in your deck feature stars as a symbol? How might they relate to this card?
- You can also use exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.

Questions for Journaling

- Am I hopeful? Do I hold high hopes, or do I become pessimistic?

- How do I heal? Do I bear old wounds and grudges easily, or do I let go quickly?
- Do I view myself as successful and lucky? Where does this success and luck lie?
- What experiences of luck have I had?
- What was the last wish I made? Did it come true?
- What forms can healing come in?

Optional Homework

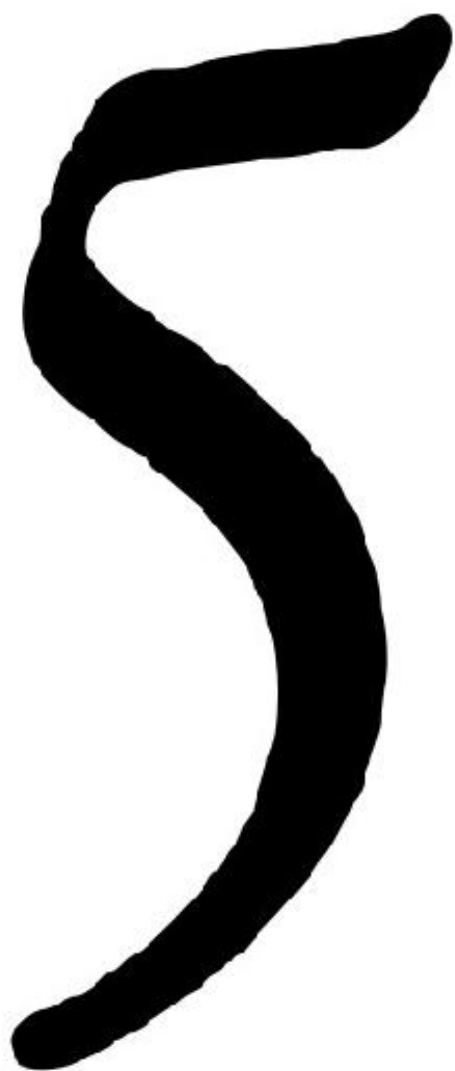
- Try at least two of the exercises for developing intuition, and record the results in your Tarot journal.
- Make a Tarot Journal entry about one of the cards you studied.
- Write a Tarot journal entry about a feminine archetype in your life and how it has affected you.

Further Reading

The Faces of the Goddess, by Lotte Motz, for more on the Divine Feminine around the world.

The White Goddess, by Robert Graves. Dubious history, but inspired the concept of Maiden/Mother/Crone.

The Thunder, Perfect Mind is a 3rd century Gnostic text spoken by the feminine Wisdom-for a further reflection of the High Priestess.
(<http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/thunder.html>).



READING TAROT:
BEGINNINGS

We interrupt our studies of the Major Arcana to take a look at some of the first considerations of reading the cards. Ideally, you should be doing readings as early on in the course as possible, even if they are just one-card readings as part of your Daily Draw exercise or Tarot journaling. Therefore, we need to examine some of the basics of performing a reading.

The Purpose of a Reading

EXERCISE 5.1

In your journal, ask yourself "Why do we read Tarot?" What can a Tarot reading be used for? What kind of questions can we answer? Spend a few minutes with these questions, and then have a look at some of the possible answers below.

A Tarot reading can be used for problem solving, decision making, brainstorming, future divining, present assessing, fun, character analysis, planning, spiritual insight, or inspiration.

A Tarot reading can answer Yes/No questions and questions about what if...?, love, money, work, advice, people, travel, sex, family, environment, self-improvement, religion, hobbies, career ... anything! However, there are some questions that you may personally feel you shouldn't answer, even though you are able to.

The reasons why we read Tarot are numerous and entirely individual. You will have an idea of why you read Tarot: this should be kept in mind and possibly added to your Mission Statement from Exercise 1.3. Similarly, the reasons why somebody may come to you for a reading, or why you may use the cards for your own readings, are as varied as the people themselves. Bear this in mind when you do readings, as it makes you less judgmental of your querents and yourself.

The Objectives of a Reader

Not only do people (including yourself) have an idea of what they want from a reading, they also have an idea of what they want from you as the

giver of that reading. Although the purpose of a Tarot reading may vary depending on the question, the reader, and the querent, the objectives of the Tarot reader are often the same no matter what. Although each individual may place a different emphasis on these various objectives, they are viewed as the most effective and ethical objectives for a Tarot reader.

- Accuracy: It is expected that your reading is as accurate as possible.
- Honesty: It is expected that you tell the truth about the reading to the querent, and don't twist or hide information.
- Empathy/Sympathy: It is expected that you understand the querent's view, character, problem, etc, even if it is not something you agree with. You are expected to approach the querent's situation in a friendly manner.
- Nonjudgment. • It is expected that you do not judge the querent, their question, or situation, as this will negatively affect the reading and your ability to communicate.
- Comfort: If the honest and accurate reading is painful, you are expected to make it easier to absorb, being compassionate. There are ways of saying things that make them less painful without twisting the truth.
- Advice/guidance: If the outcome in a reading looks bad, why not make it better with some advisory cards? Don't just predict doom and gloom and leave the querent alone to work out how to solve the problem.
- Effective listening: Sometimes people just want to be heard. Don't interrupt your querents, offer a friendly and encouraging ear, and really listen.

Accompanying some of these objectives are other responsibilities and ethical questions, which we will explore in Lesson 20.

The Physical Process of Reading

There is a difference between the process of interpreting the cards in a reading and the physical process of performing the reading. This physical process includes shuffling the cards, laying them out, forming them into a spread, and other very minute details that we otherwise do not consider. However, it is important that you are confident when doing your readings, and knowing your favorite way of shuffling, dealing, and forming a spread makes you more confident and adds to your individual reading style. I often find that when I teach people to read and ask them to do a reading, they spend the first few minutes (the physical process) asking if they're doing it right! This does not make for a confident reader, so we need to examine the very first things we do when we pick up a Tarot deck and begin a reading.

* EXERCISE 5.2

You may have already been doing one-card spreads or a couple of the exercises in previous lessons that involve spreads. You may already have shuffled a Tarot deck. First, take the deck in your hands and feel the weight and size of it. How does it feel? If you are accustomed to shuffling a poker deck, you may be surprised at the larger size of the cards. This is a standard feature of Tarot decks that allows the artwork to be seen more clearly, but it can cause problems for readers with small hands. If the deck in your hands is too big for you, consider getting a smaller one. Alternatively, just spend some time shuffling the deck while watching television or doing other handless tasks, to accustom yourself to it.

For this exercise, you may choose to ask a friend or fellow student to be your querent, pretending they have come to you for a reading. Now, shuffle the deck. Shuffle it for about thirty seconds.

Stop!

How were you shuffling? Hand over hand? Were you cutting the pack into small clumps and reforming it? Did you lay it on the table and swirl the cards around? Did you split the pack in two and rifle it back like a poker dealer? Ask yourself why you chose that form of shuffling-is it the one you

find easiest and most comfortable? If so, great-stick with it! But if you shuffled that way because you thought it was more fitting for a Tarot reader, think about how comfortable it is for you. Also consider if you wish to use card reversals (which we will examine later) because if you don't, mixing the cards on the table will result in some cards turning upside down.

Also, did you shuffle the cards yourself, or did you hand them to your querent to shuffle? This will be influenced by your beliefs about others touching your cards, and the rule of thumb here is that you should stick to what you feel comfortable with. If you don't feel you want others to touch your cards, don't pass them to the querent to shuffle. There is no uniform practice regarding this.

Now, shuffle the deck some more, and ask a question (or alternatively, if you are doing this course with others, or if you can find a willing guinea pig, get somebody to act as your querent and have them ask a question).

Stop!

Did you ask the question aloud? Did you ask the querent what their question was? Did you write the question down? Some Tarot readers, when reading for others, prefer not to know the querent's question while others prefer to know it. This is a personal preference and depends on your reading style: if you find it easier, even if it's just while you're learning, to know the question so that you have a format around which you can wrap your interpretation, that's fine. After all, there's a difference between accurately interpreting the Empress as a creative project, and accurately interpreting the Empress as the querent's recently begun stage production.

If you wrote the question down, you have the foundation for a reading record. We've already looked at the Tarot journal in which you can keep a record of all your readings, so if you do this, don't forget to write down the rest of the reading. You can also ask a querent to do this and take notes during the reading, so that they can take it home with them and reflect on it at a later date. This helps any advice your reading has given remain useful.

What kind of question was asked? Was it general, such as "How's next week going to go?" or was it specific, "How can I ace the job interview?" The generality or specificity of the question will dictate what kind of spread you use, including how many cards, and also how you interpret the cards.

Now it's time to do the spread. For now, no matter what the question, we'll do a three card Past-Present-Future spread. Pick the first card from the pack without laying it down yet.

Stop!

From where did you choose the card? The top of the pack? The bottom? At random from the entire deck? Did you cut the pack into three piles and choose the card from the top of the first pile? This is another personal preference, and none of them are better. You may find you use only one method, or you may find the method you use depends on the spread. For instance, I usually take the cards from the top of the pack, but during certain spreads I like to fan the cards and offer them to the querent to choose from.

Lay the first card down on the table. Now, choose the second card and lay it down.

Stop!

When you laid down the card, did you lay it face-up or face-down? Again, a personal preference will dictate this: some readers prefer to see only one card at a time, and then afterward link them all together, and so will place them all face-down before turning them over one by one. Other readers prefer to see all the cards at once and start weaving the interpretations together right away.

When you turned the card over, did you turn it from the bottom of the card and flip it upward? Or did you turn it from right to left/left to right like you'd turn the pages of a book? This choice is only pertinent if you don't use reversed cards, since turning the cards from bottom to top/top to bottom will flip the card image-most annoying if you otherwise have all the cards the right way up! Flipping the cards like pages of a book negates this effect.

Now, choose the final card and lay it down in the reading.

Stop!

How have you placed the cards? Are they all in one straight line? Are they in a triangle? What shape have you formed with them? With a threecard reading such as this, it's not so important, but if you have a larger reading you may wish to form a particular shape with the cards to make it easier to interpret, more pleasant to look at, and to delineate groups of cards or cards that interact in some way. Often with a pre-made spread you'll find a shape is given, but if you make up your own spreads, or create them on the spot for each reading (examined later), you'll need to be more aware of the format you've laid the cards in.

Finally, think about what this would be like if the reading were for a stranger instead of for yourself or your friend. Ask yourself:

Did you do anything before you initially picked up the deck or began shuffling? Did you take a few deep breaths? Did you center yourself, do a visualization exercise to ground yourself, or contact your higher self? Did you pray? All these are personal touches and if you are so inclined they can add a higher level to your readings. If you want to pray before shuffling, there's nothing to say you can't-but you might want to do it silently if you have a querent who wouldn't appreciate it.

Your Reading Style

As reflected above in the first minute of a Tarot reading, it is clear that every Tarot reader is different and has his or her own style of reading. This is up to the reader's personality, the kind of readings they do, whom they read for, and a varied mixture of their beliefs about the Tarot. Your own style of reading is likely to develop over time, and it may also change drastically at some point to reflect a change in those you read for, your lifestyle, and more. Therefore it is important to remember that one's reading style is an entirely personal choice, and there is no single right way of reading the cards. Your style of reading will also affect much more than how you shuffle, deal the cards, and cut the pack.

EXERCISE 5.3

Consider the following:

- What kind of readings do you perform most often? Fun readings? Problem solving? Brainstorming? Spiritual guidance? This will affect how you deliver your readings, the spreads you use most often, and the length of time your readings take. Readings for fun are likely to be shorter than readings for spiritual guidance, and fortunetelling is likely to involve a different spread than a question about problem solving. You will also find that the kind of readings you perform most often influences how you interpret the cards generally, as you'll use certain aspects of each card more often than others. For instance, you are less likely to interpret cards as people during a brainstorming reading regarding a business proposal, but more likely to see them as people during fortune telling.
- Who do you most often read for? Yourself? Others? Older people, younger people, women, men, other Tarot readers? This will also affect how you deliver your readings, as well as the questions you get asked most often. It may also influence the Tarot deck you choose to use—you may happen to know that many of the older people you read for prefer a certain deck, or many of the younger people respond well to a brighter, bolder deck.
- How big are your hands? This will affect the size of deck you use, as well as how you shuffle the cards.
- Do you use card reversals? This will affect how you shuffle and lay down the cards, as well as how you interpret the cards.
- Do you hold particular beliefs about the cards? (discussed in Lesson 2). This will influence whether you let others touch your cards in a reading, who shuffles the deck, and may dictate any pre-reading rituals, prayers, breathing exercises, or visualizations you wish to perform. It may also influence where you read and any accoutrements

you have around you during the reading (candles, crystals, holy book, deity images, etc.).

Saying the Meanings Aloud

A simple trick for learning to read better right from the start is to say the meanings aloud. This is regardless of whether you are doing the reading for yourself or for someone else, and regardless of whether the reading is serious or silly. Do not read the meanings from a book or just say them in your head-you will find it more effective for learning card meanings and for accurately weaving the interpretations together if you talk through it all. This may take the form of thinking out loud, where you don't give the finalized interpretation but instead talk your way through each card individually and then talk your way through how each card affects and interacts with the others in the spread. Doing it this way also means you will have to put the card meanings into your own language, expressing them with your own manner of speech, rather than just reading another person's written words.

Learning with Others: Practice Readings

If possible, try to get together with other Tarot students or enthusiasts and regularly swap readings. From this point in the course, you will be given several spreads to use, and it would be great if you had a person to share them with. If you have no friends who are learning Tarot as well, you may want to consider going online to the many Tarot forums to find others with similar needs to yourself. Aeclectic Tarot Forum (www.aeclectic.net) has a subforum where you can ask for people to do readings for in return for other readings or just feedback. Reading with others in this way, especially if they are face-to-face, can be immense fun as well as useful for the learner, so don't be afraid to make an evening of it if you've got some interested friends: open a bottle of wine, put some music on, share some food, and do lots of readings for each other! You will also find that you pick up some techniques or ideas from others, and grow in confidence as a Tarot reader.

Less Is More: The One-Card Spread

Although it would be logical to assume that having more cards in a spread would give you more detail, for many Tarot readers the opposite is true. Especially when you are just starting out, you may find that having more than three cards in a spread divides your attention and spreads your mind too thinly over the spread, blocking any detail you may need to be aware of in the cards. Even advanced readers rarely perform a spread that has more than fifteen cards, and largely you will find that the questions asked during a Tarot reading can be answered with only a few cards. The following One-Card spread works on the basis that it offers the reader a single image to focus on, one single meaning that can be examined in detail to get to the bottom of a question and its answer. This spread is also useful if you want a quick reading; it is used for Daily Draw exercises, and is excellent for self-reflection and affirmations.

WHAT CAN CARD I REPRESENT?

- A Yes/No answer
- Advice
- Prediction for the future

One-Card Spread



- Answer for reflection
- "Who will be most influential in this venture?"
- "What is the main obstacle blocking my way?"

- "What quality is most important for me to encourage in myself at this time?"
- "Give me an affirmation about my relationships."
- "How will today go?"
- "How did the interview go?"
- "Give me quick advice about what to do now in my novel."

In fact, any question you ask can conceivably be answered by one card. However, if a question has several components (as some of the more complicated ones do) more cards may be necessary to examine those components, and the various levels of the question. But a single card will allow the reader and querent to have a single focus for the reading, even though several cards may later be drawn.

Practicing Objectivity

It is often said that one should not or cannot read for oneself. Some have translated this as meaning it is bad luck to do so, and thus many beginners are stuck for a means of practicing readings: you are your own best guinea pig. However, there is a kernel of truth behind this superstition-reading for yourself can be done, but is extremely difficult to do well because you are not an objective reader. When you have such strong hopes, desires, and fears affecting the reading, your interpretation of the cards is likely to be warped by them. You may not get the whole truth from the reading, nor are you likely to see the outcome clearly. Don't worry, this is natural-we are all human, and even the most experienced Tarot readers may still suffer from the tendency to only see in the cards what they want to see. However, objectivity can be learned, so these are some exercises that help you gain objectivity in your readings. They are not necessarily directly concerning an objective mind, but encourage you to distance yourself from your biases.

in your readings. They are not necessarily directly concerning an objective mind, but encourage you to distance yourself from your biases.

EXERCISE 5.4

This may seem silly, but it can be a lot of fun, especially done with a few people. Simply stand before your bedroom or house door and try to imagine you are not the inhabitant of the place but instead a guest who has never visited before. Now, step through the door and spend ten minutes looking at the features of the place-the items around, the decor, the activities and hobbies represented. Ask yourself what the inhabitant of this place is like. What does their place suggest about them? Be critical, be imaginative, and have fun! If with others, do all this out loud as a discussion-you may find you end up making fun of yourself, but this is from yourself, so should not be hurtful.

EXERCISE 5.5

This is usually not a recommendation I give to anybody, but just once couldn't hurt. Switch the television to a talk show Jerry Springer always gives plenty of material-and instead of laughing at the guests or judging them, try (really try!) to see why they do what they do. Even if what they do is marrying their sister, believing in alien abduction, or running a cafe for dogs. Once again, this exercise will not give you 100 percent objectivity, but it will encourage you to step aside from your biases and values when you view others. This is a necessity in certain readings.

EXERCISE 5.6

If you have kept diaries in the past, dig them out and read them. Read what your younger and more innocent self had to say, but view the written word as having come from a completely different person. How would you have guided that person? What advice would you have given them?

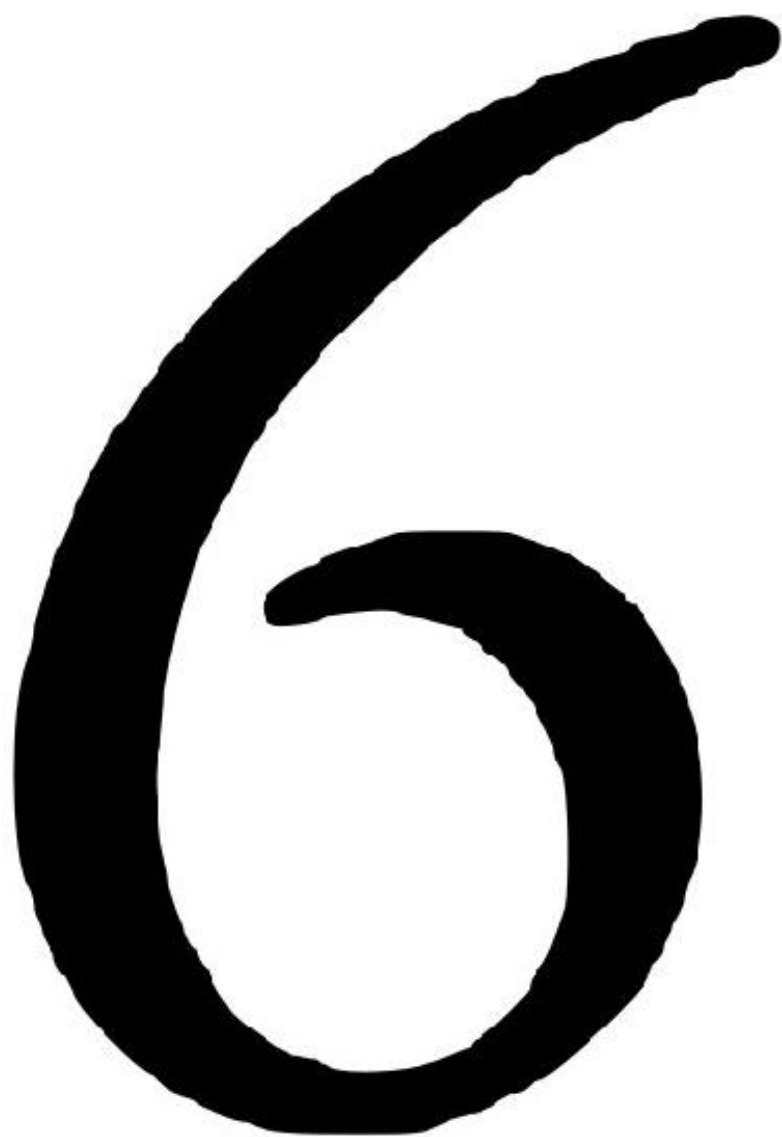
EXERCISE 5.7

When you do read for yourself, do your reading as normal and write it down. Then take a second look at the reading, and without the original

question in mind, try to reinterpret the spread completely differently. How could each of those cards be different? Could this reading be indicating something else? If necessary, take out a book and see what meanings it gives-compare the second reading with your previous reading and note the differences. This is not to say that the second reading should then be followed. Your first reading, from yourself and from your heart, is always to be taken above any book meanings since it was born through your intuition. But the second reading accustoms you to seeing where your biases and hopes have swayed the reading, and teaches you to see a wide variety of meanings for each card.

Optional Homework

- Look back at the Mission Statement you created in Exercise 1.3. Now that you have a better idea of the objectives of a Tarot reading and reader, do you feel you need to alter the Mission Statement? Would you add anything to it or remove anything?
- In your Tarot Journal, start noting down thoughts about the kind of Tarot reader you want to be. Whom do you want to read for most? What kinds of questions do you think you'd enjoy answering?
- Make a promise to yourself that you will try to shuffle your cards at least once a day for a few minutes. The more you shuffle the deck, the better you will be at shuffling-avoiding any embarrassing mishaps with the cards during a reading!
- Start doing a One-Card spread every day as your Daily Draw exercise (see Exercise 2.4)
- Before you start the next lesson, find four items that represent one of each of the four elements (Earth, Air, Fire, Water) and write about them in your Tarot Journal. Why did you choose those items? What do they represent about the elements?



THE MAJOR ARCANA:
MASCULINE ARCHETYPES

In Lesson 4, we have already explored the Feminine Archetypes that can be found in the Major Arcana and so to accompany that lesson we will be examining the Masculine Archetypes in the Major Arcana now. As we will see during this lesson, these archetypes repeatedly use the number 4, and so we will also be looking at other symbols in Tarot that come in fours: the elements, seasons, stages of the sun, suits, and Court Cards. Many of these, such as the four elements, will become extremely important in later lessons when we approach the Minor Arcana and Court Cards in more detail.

Carl Jung and the Fourfold Divine Masculine

The Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Jung wrote a large amount of material concerning gender, men, women, and the process of individuation whereby the soul and personality evolve and reunite with their lost self. As part of this process, Jung tells us that every man has a feminine aspect to his soul (anima) as well as his masculine self, and every woman has a masculine aspect to her soul (animus) as well as her feminine self. The goal is to balance and unite the self and the soul in a sacred marriage. When these two sides of the self are conflicting, the person may become mentally ill, unbalanced, or unhappy. Although we should remember that gender in the Tarot is only a symbol, what Jung further wrote about the animus serves as an excellent symbol for the Divine Masculine, as well as for the four elements and the four suits of the Tarot.

Warrior. The first stage of the development of the animus is the personification of physical power or power in the world, a realization of the ability to act, and a desire to explore the world around us.

Lover: The second stage is the engagement with the world in a thorough, passionate way. The animus at this stage gives itself up entirely to experiencing what comes its way, and puts its all into everything it does.

King.- The third stage is the consolidation of power and ability, where the knowledge and wisdom achieved from the previous two stages are used to create, rule, and govern. This stage is also when the animus

begins to master certain skills instead of simply dabbling with them all.

Magician/Sorcerer/Sage: The final stage is where the knowledge, skills, and mastery achieved in the previous three stages are taken within the animus and used to achieve realization, mystical experience, and understanding. This is the inward stage that brings about the inception of new ideas and understanding.

These four stages of the Masculine Archetype or animus can be seen in ancient Egyptian mythology, in which the sun god, Ra, travels through the sky on a boat (the "Boat of a Million Years") during the day. His journey over the twenty-four-hour period is split into four faces:

Kephri: The scarab beetle that pushes the sun up over the horizon at dawn. This face of Ra is the face of new beginnings and initial effort.

Ra: The midday sun at its strongest, when the heat blazes; nothing can harm him.

Atum: The setting sun in the evening, when he descends below the horizon. This is the face of waning power but joy for the day just gone.

Sokar. The sun in the Underworld at nighttime; at this stage, Ra rides the Boat of a Million Years through the waters filled with demons who wish the sun harm, trying to prevent its rising.

The above two methods of looking at the Masculine Archetypes can also be applied to a project:

Warrior/Kephri: The inception of the idea, and the initial struggle to give it a good start.

Lover/Ra: The rising strength of the project, and the energy put into it to help it develop.

King/Atum: The joy at the project's completion, and the consolidation of power through success.

Magician/Sokar: The reflection or learning process that takes place within the project's creator now that it is completed. A brief rest before beginning anew.

Consequently, we can apply these four faces and stages of the Divine Masculine to the four elements and the four suits of the Tarot.

The Four Elements, Suits, and Courts

The four Elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water exist inasmuch as we can experience them on a basic level: we can feel the fire we make at a campsite; we can breathe in air all around us; we can swim in the water of the ocean; and we can plant seeds in earth and let it run through our fingertips. However, as anybody will know from basic chemistry lessons in school, there are in fact hundreds more elements that form the makeup of the universe around us (such as hydrogen, magnesium, and lithium), which also form the makeup of these four elements. It is easier to view the four elements as metaphysical and abstract concepts that show us the building blocks of the universe. These elements give us a handy fourfold view of the world around us that enables us to organize it into easily understandable forms. Hence, we may say someone has a fiery temper, or an enemy may give you an icy stare-and we know what these terms denote instantly. The four elements are just symbols employed by the Tarot to help us remember meanings and apply the cards to our lives.

This is not a new idea. Many ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and physicians, such as Hippocrates, believed that four humors or substances existed in the human body that, if balanced, created a healthy person. Their imbalance caused various illnesses depending on which humor predominated. Further, these four humors were associated with the four elements. Today many people still believe that we all have aspects of our natures that are associated with Fire, Water, Air or Earth, and aspects of our

lives correspond to these Elements (which we will see in practice in a Tarot spread later).

EXERCISE 6.1

If you did the optional homework from last lesson, take the item that you chose to represent Earth and place it in front of you. Read back over your notes about why you chose that item and what it represents to you. Why did you choose that item for this element? From this, ask yourself what role the element of Earth plays in your personal and everyday life, or in your surroundings.

Take a walk outside, preferably in a green space. Failing this, find a tree or some plants. Spend some time with this green space or tree looking at it, engaging with it, taking it into your senses. How does it make you feel? What thoughts does it bring to your mind? Ask yourself how humans engage with Earth and what it represents.

EXERCISE 6.2

Brainstorm the element of Air. How does it interact with human life? Consider breath, music, hearing, words, song, shouts, sighs, oxygen. How does this element make you feel?

EXERCISE 6.3

Spend some time doing something active-more active than usual for you. Dance, jump up and down, do some exercise, lift some weights, or go jogging. While doing this, note how your energy levels rise and fall, peak and trough. Note any strains in your body, your mind, and feelings. How does your own energy flow? How much passion and will do you put into your activity?

EXERCISE 6.4

If you are lucky enough to live by the ocean, a lake, river, or waterfall, go visit it! Swim in the water (if it's safe and legal to do so), submerge

yourself in it, listen to the flow of the water. If you don't live near a natural body of water, go to a swimming pool-it won't be as peaceful, but you will still get something out of it. Failing that, take a long bath. Relax and feel how the water flows over your body. Ask yourself what water means to humans, and think about both its positive qualities and its destructive side.

EXERCISE 6.5

The four elements have their own qualities and associations, but it is useful if you have a personal understanding of each of them that comes from experience and interaction. Try to keep a few pages in your Tarot journal free for each element, and whenever you gain a new insight into an element write it in that space. You might also like to create collages of images for each element out of pictures that you find symbolic, with matching colors, shapes, etc.

Each element is associated with a suit from the Tarot pack and a Court Card. This denotes the nature of each suit and its main concerns or area of life that it covers. It also tells us valuable aspects of each Court Card, and as we will see in a later lesson, the elemental attributes of the Court Cards alone can give us all we need for interpretation.

Earth = Suit of Coins; Pages

Air = Suit of Swords; Knights

Water = Suit of Cups; Queens

Fire = Suit of Wands; Kings

So, the suit of Coins is concerned with the areas of life Earth represents: the mundane, physical world, work, business, talents, money, trade, heritage, roots, health, and family. The suit of Swords is associated with the element of Air, and therefore it is concerned with matters of the mind, mental ability, the intellect, words, studies, and conflict. The suit of Wands is ruled by Fire, and governs matters of energy, drive, will, passion, goals,

sexuality, and ambitions. The suit of Cups is associated with Water, and therefore looks at our emotional lives, social relationships, feelings, spiritual lives, religious experiences, and connections with others. It is worth mentioning that in some Tarot decks the associations may be different, though usually you will only find the Wands and Swords suits swapped so that Wands are given Air and Swords Fire. This is a personal preference, and you will eventually find which you prefer. However, in this book we will stick with Wands/Fire and Swords/Air since it is more common and is the association given for the two main influential decks in the modern era, the Rider-Waite and the Crowley-Thoth.

EXERCISE 6.6

The four elements don't just appear systematically in the four suits and four Courts. They are everywhere in the Tarot, particularly in individual cards. Their appearance or lack of appearance in certain cards can give a lot of detail and symbolism for you to interpret.

Take the Major Arcana from your Tarot deck and put them in order from 0 The Fool to XXI The World. Go through the cards one by one, and identify the elements as they appear in each card.

- Which element appears most prominently in the card?
- In what form does the element appear?
- How does the scene or character(s) interact with the element?
- How elementally balanced is the card? Do all four appear, or just one overall?
- What elements does this card lack?

Now compare the notes you have made for each card. Ask yourself-

- Are there any cards that share the same predominant element or combination of elements?

- Are there cards that have in common the symbols of an element or colors associated with an element?

. How do you think these cards are similar?

Other Masculine Archetypes

If you've watched a number of films you will be able to quickly pinpoint masculine archetypes that don't fit with the above four given by Carl Jung. They may include Father, Cowboy, Scoundrel, Tyrant, Weakling, Victim, Best Friend, Oppressor, Hunter, Professor, and Hero. Mostly you will find that these roles are played by men in films, literature, and mythology-and in the Tarot as well. But a woman can equally perform such roles in real life.

EXERCISE 6.7

Choose a classic film to watch. It doesn't have to be old to be classic choose something well known to the majority of film viewers. Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings, The Matrix, Disney movies, Its A Wonderful Life, E. T, or Highlander are all excellent options! Watch the film with a pad of paper by your side, and note down any masculine stereotypes, roles, or archetypes that appear. When you've finished the film, take your Major Arcana from the deck and compare the cards to the archetypes you have collected. Do they fit anywhere? Does a particular character remind you of a card? You may find that associating a card with a character from a film that you are familiar with is a useful platform from which to launch into interpretation and understanding.

IV The Emperor

With his readiness to take action and responsibility, and his association with the number IV and therefore manifestation and stability in the material world, the Emperor is similar to the King archetype discussed above, and can also be seen as a Father figure.

The Emperor, with his worldly throne, crown, scepter of power, seated upon a cube or dais, has the world at his fingertips. He is the ruler of all he surveys, as well as the one who brings order to it. He is number 4 in the Major Arcana, and numerologically this is the number of manifestation and of creating order and rules out of the creative force and raw materials of the number 3-the Empress. The two cards work in tandem, the Empress bringing the life in its raw and untapped state, providing the creative urge and drive, and the imagination to conceive the idea, and the Emperor sculpting this into something solid and material. He is the card that brings results.

Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.

-DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

-HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The Emperor is also a card of the active masculine whereas the Empress is the active feminine. Together they create life and matter. Where the Empress is Venus the Emperor is Mars, and his warlike, aggressive aspect is clear in the suit of armor he is often depicted wearing. For the Emperor matters must be faced with force. However, this force is usually positive-without force clay cannot be molded into a beautiful sculpture; without force wood cannot be sawed to build a house. Once the matter has resolved itself, and once manifestation has occurred, the Emperor takes responsibility and action for maintaining its order and solidity. He is the giver of rules and the holder of authority.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Red.- Signifies the active masculine principle. It is also the color of Mars and of fire, as well as alchemical sulphur, which is the masculine element in the union between masculine and feminine.

Fire. Activity, action.

Crown: Indicates the Emperor's rule and authority. He has power over the matter at hand.

Throne/dais/cube: The throne or dais not only signifies the Emperor's rule but also the number 4. The throne is often cube-shaped, and the cube is the shape of matter and solidity. The fourth dimension in space is time, and where the number 3 is raw material in matter, the number 4 gives that material extension into reality.

Lamb/ram: Links the Emperor to the zodiacal Fire sign Aries, a sign of action, masculinity, extroversion, ruled by Mars, the Roman god of war.

Eagle: Far-sightedness, lofty ambition.

Phallus: A graphic representation of the active masculine principle, and the force and power in the Emperor's energy, as well as the extension of his will.

KEYWORDS: Masculinity, action, responsibility, foundations, organization, leadership, rulership, duty, solidity, matter, extension, ambition, fatherhood, virility, order, career, support, domination, determination

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: The Emperor appears in a wide variety of fairy tales or folklore as the wise, fatherly benefactor of the hero. He not only gives a gift to the hero that enables him to continue his journey, but also acts as a guide and rulegiver. This card can also be found, both positively and negatively, in the political treatise *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli. This book gives advice on how a government or political leader can and should lead its people and control them, and explores the different ways people come to power and the different methods they use to gain respect from their subjects. It is made clear in the book that those who use fear and oppression as their tools fall very quickly (though these are indeed tools which can be used!), while those who use compassion and justice gain the respect of their people and therefore their support. In just

the same way, the Emperor rules fairly and justly and thereby becomes more than a ruler: he becomes a father to his people.

As A PERSON: The person signified by the Emperor is fatherly, authoritative, and responsible, with an understanding of leadership and social dynamics within a group. He knows how to organize and run a group of people. He is usually fair and compassionate though he may not seem so at first, as he may appear quite cold and distant. His thoughts are usually clear and he makes decisions with little deliberation or hesitation. He can also be hot-tempered, however, and can act aggressively if his carefully laid plans are thwarted. He is headstrong and career-minded, and knows exactly where he wants to go in life. If anything stands in his way, he will not hesitate to remove that obstacle.

EXERCISE 6.8

- Take the Emperor from your deck and examine the card carefully. Are there any symbols or images in your card that strike you that are different from those listed above? What might they mean and how do they make you feel?
- Take a page in your Tarot journal and brainstorm the terms "Leadership" and "Responsibility." What have you got? How do the words and ideas you've written down relate to the Emperor and to his role as a leader and father figure?
- You can use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What are my responsibilities in life?
- What are my duties in life?
- What roles have I taken upon myself?
- What do I aim to achieve?

- What have I achieved and what do I now rule over? What am I confident of?
- In what ways do I set down foundations? Are they firm foundations?
- How do I organize myself? Do I find this difficult or easy?
- After reading The Prince by Machiavelli, reflect in your journal upon the concepts of power and leadership-both their positive and negative applications.

V The Hierophant

Often depicted as a priest or person of religious authority, the Hierophant is not always a well-received card by modern Tarot readers. Sadly, some people's bad experiences of religious authority have tainted their view of this card, so it is wise to be aware of one's own views when studying it.

Everyone and everything around you is your teacher.

-KEN KEYES, JR.

If the Magician is the Word of Power that causes the process of creation to begin-the breath of God hovering over the waters in the Old Testament-then the Hierophant is that Word made Flesh Jesus in the New Testament. He is the manifestation upon Earth of the Divine and the spiritual realm (the title Hierophant is from the Greek hierophany, meaning "manifestation of the sacred"), and as such he speaks wisdom with the authority of a higher power. The Hierophant is the quintessential teacher and wisdom giver, though his knowledge comes from received and accepted tradition as opposed to the inner wisdom and inspired knowledge of the Hermit who treads his own path. He is the messenger and the mediator between man and God, but also the mouthpiece of the Divine, and thus a means through which the Divine can interact with the mundane world.

The wisest have the most authority.

-PLATO

COMMON SYMBOLS

Bulls: The astrological sign of Taurus.

Elephants: Memory and age, bringing wisdom.

Pentagram: Symbol of man and the five senses and therefore manifestation of spirit in man.

Priestly garb: An outward sign of the Hierophant's spiritual authority.

Acolytes: Students or helpers indicate that the Hierophant is a teacher and that his wisdom and knowledge is given to others instead of kept for his own use. Acolytes also accept the fact that he has authority over others because of his wisdom.

Keys: Usually crossed, these keys are those that the Hierophant holds and can give others, which unlock gateways and doors into higher understanding. The Hierophant shows the way.

Pillars: Two pillars on either side of the Hierophant link him to the High Priestess (in some decks he is called High Priest). Together, they represent different yet mutual approaches to learning.

Book: A book signifies learning and knowledge, specifically traditional, accepted knowledge, and the basis of tradition upon which the Hierophant's authority and wisdom rests.

Checkered floor. Sometimes the Hierophant views life as black-and-white, one-or-the-other. Too much tradition and not enough initiative make for a closed mind.

KEYWORDS: Authority, teaching, tradition, rules, reason, manifestation of God's word, learning from tradition, faith, trust, belief, memory, conformity, dogma, wisdom, mediation, religion, advice

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: Jesus has already been mentioned; but Dumbledore from the Harry Potter series and Obi-Wan Kenobi from Star Wars would be equally appropriate for the Hierophant's role. Both figures are paternal wisdom-givers for the protagonist, revealing mysteries and teaching them about the ancient traditions they have found themselves immersed in. They offer advice and show them the way without forcing their choice.

As A PERSON: The Hierophant in your life is a blessing: this person is an excellent teacher, full of wisdom and knowledge and the desire to convey it to others. They appear to others as wise beyond their years and ready to give advice when needed. They may also have the knack of saying just the right thing at the right time to fill in the gaps in a puzzle or give people moments of realization. Sometimes the Hierophant can be an actual priest, priestess, or other person in spiritual/religious authority. They are often a figure in whom you have recourse and trust.

EXERCISE 6.9

- Take the Hierophant card from your deck. Examine the card and highlight any symbols or images in it. Are they different from those listed above? What do they suggest to you? How does the card image make you feel?
- On a blank Tarot journal page, write down all the places, books, people, and traditions that have given you wisdom and knowledge in the past. From where do you receive your wisdom? How much trust do you place in this received understanding?
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What rules are there in my life that I have to adhere to?
- What traditions have I learned or currently practice?

- How do I respond to authority and those in power over me or those more knowledgeable than myself?
- What aspects of the sacred manifest in my life?
- How do I view religion as opposed to spirituality? Is it a positive or negative force?
- Does my deck change the card's title, image, or associations? If so, why?
- Choose a religion of the world that has a sacred book upon which its morality and lifestyle are based. Read that book. Reflect in your journal upon how these spiritual teachings affect our lives, their purpose, and both their positive and negative effects.

IX The Hermit

In Buddhist thought, it is possible to reach Enlightenment and choose to stay incarnated for all your subsequent lifetimes (instead of attaining Nirvana) in order to help others reach their own Enlightenment. This Bodhisattva figure uses his own inner light and shines it out for others to see, showing them the way in the darkness of the wheel of samsara (incarnation). Through his own spiritual perfection, experience, and (more importantly) his actions, he acts as a beacon for others. Where the Hierophant is the Divine Word, the Hermit is the Divine Work.

The miracle comes quietly into the mind that stops an instant, and is still.

-A Course in Miracles

However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what goodwill they do you if you do not act upon them?

-THE DHAMMAPADA

However, the Hermit is also a card of silence. We cannot achieve wisdom through chattering and partying. The seeds of wisdom are indeed sown constantly within us, but to allow them to grow we must enter within ourselves, alone, in the darkness, turning our inner light inward to illuminate ourselves. To do this, we sometimes need to descend into the darkest recesses of our souls, our Hades, and act as a psychopomp (soul-guide) for ourselves in that darkness.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Lantern/light: The light is that of spiritual wisdom, but also of the sun. In the darkness of the underworld this is the sun at midnight (Kephra), its hidden, silent power. This represents the Hermit's inner journey.

Cerberus: The three-headed dog guardian of Hades is the Hermit's companion and enemy. His presence on the card indicates that the Hermit is in the Underworld.

Orphic egg: A winged egg wrapped with a snake is an ancient Greek symbol of rebirth into mystery religions, wherein spiritual wisdom is attained. It is also the silent womb and spermatozoa that symbolize creation, and from the silence of which all life is born.

Mountain: The Hermit standing upon a mountaintop indicates his lofty spiritual achievement.

Solitary: The Hermit is alone, and this is sometimes seen as loneliness. But the journey within oneself can only be completed alone.

Darkness: Indicates the darkness of Hades and the inner self.

Hand: A symbol of the Hebrew letter yod, meaning hand or sperm. The hand of the Hermit extends to others as a psychopomp, and the sperm is the seed of spiritual wisdom sown within.

KEYWORDS: Introspection, silence, quiet, meditation, wisdom, privacy, solitude, loneliness, Underworld, inner self, giving of wisdom,

psychopomp, helping others through wisdom.

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: Rafiki, the baboon shaman from The Lion King, is a good example of the Hermit. He is always on his own and seems to have amassed a considerable amount of spiritual wisdom. Most importantly, Rafiki repeatedly acts as a guide for the hero, Simba, when he is lost or does not know what to do. But Rafiki never tells Simba the answers-only shows him the way using the light of his wisdom.

AS A PERSON: A loner who prefers his own company to that of others, the Hermit is a retiring, often quiet and modest person. To others he may seem lonely, but his solitary nature allows him to watch and learn from the world around. His silence enables him to fully integrate his new wisdom into his life. This person may come across as deeply spiritual, wise, and keen to guide others.

EXERCISE 6.io

- Take the Hermit card from your deck and examine it. What symbols appear on your card? What do you think they say about the card?
- Go somewhere like a cafe or park, and sit in silence. Listen to all the sounds around you. Watch the world go by. What did you hear? What sound does the river make? What sound does the tree make? What was that smile for? Allow all the experiences, sights, sounds, smells, and colors to flow into you and see what you learn from them.
- For a week or two (set yourself a duration you are comfortable with) spend a set amount of time practising meditation-ten to thirty minutes is a good time. This meditation should not be aimed at trying to clear your mind, but allowing your mind to run through its thoughts until it naturally reaches a silent state on its own. When your time is over, write down your experiences and thoughts in your Tarot journal. What has the Hermit's silence brought you?
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- How do I cope on my own?
- Have I experienced loneliness? When was the last time I was on my own?
- How often do I practice introspection?
- What inner wisdom do I have?
- How do I express that wisdom to others? Do I use it to help others?
- How do I experience my own inner darkness? What have been the darkest times in my life and what was the light shining through for me?

The Elemental Spread

This classic spread is based on the concept of the four elements and the attributes they have to our everyday lives. It is a simple and highly effective spread that can be used for both general readings (to give an overview of one's life at this time) or for specific questions.

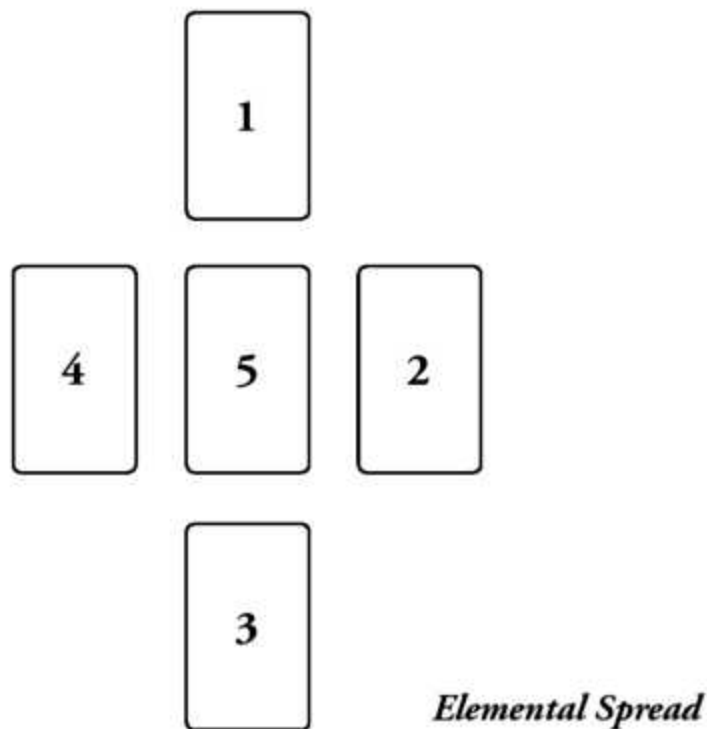
Card 1. North, Earth, Coins: The physical, everyday world. The body, health, and financial issues.

Card 2. East, Air, Swords: The intellectual, mental world. Communication, philosophical pursuits, academia.

Card 3. South, Fire, Wands: The spiritual and energetic world. Passion, drive, energy, magic.

Card 4. West, Water, Cups: The emotional and social world. Feelings, love, relationships, emotions.

Card 5. Center, Spirit: The central issue, the spirit, soul, and core of the life.



Optional Homework

- Make a Tarot Journal entry about one of the cards we have studied in this lesson. Use the Questions for Journaling and exercises as a starting point, and expand that to your own description of what you think the card means.
- Make a Tarot Journal entry about a masculine archetype in your life and how it has affected you.

Further Reading

Lord of Light and Shadow: The Many Faces of the God, by D. J. Conway, for a modern approach to the Divine Masculine.

The Witches' God, by Janet and Stewart Farrar, for the same reason.

The Flowering Rod: Men, Sex, and Spirituality, by Kenny Klein. Although it relates solely to men, it works if we see the archetypes of Warrior,

Lover, King, and Magician as symbols.

Sol Invictus: The God Tarot, by Kim Huggens and Nic Phillips, for a Tarot deck exploring the many faces of the Divine Masculine in the cards.

The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli, for further insights into the Emperor card.

Any sacred book for further insight into the Hierophant.

7

THE MAJOR ARCANA:
VIRTUES AND VICES

We continue our study of the Major Arcana with three cards that not only form a trilogy of moralistic images from the Christian era, but which have also received special attention from authors such as Aleister Crowley. These three cards were significantly changed in Crowley's Thoth Tarot, and a large number of Tarot decks today have kept these changes to better reflect a new aeon of thought. This lesson will examine the reasons for these changes alongside the traditional views of these cards, and take a look at some related concepts of alchemy, the Golden Mean, and empowerment.

Medieval Virtues in the Tarot

The three cards we are examining in this lesson are VIII Strength, XI Justice (as we will see later, these two cards are sometimes given each other's numbers), and XIV Temperance. However, it is clear that these cards played a role in the original Tarot as a trio rather than as separate cards: throughout history we see them forming a large part of a list of "Virtues" prescribed to people from the ancient Greeks to the Renaissance. Therefore, we can view them as moralistic, prescriptive, and an indication of the highest mark of one's character-from a medieval point of view. Aleister Crowley's view on that fact was markedly different, as is our modern view, as we will see later!

The four Classical Virtues from ancient Greece (which also became the four Cardinal Virtues of the Roman Catholic church and therefore the medieval period) are:

6ticato66vri (dikaio syne) Justice

av6psia (andreia)-Fortitude

tpp6vri6tq (phronesis)-Prudence

(3c)tppo66vri (sophrosyne)-Temperance

As we can already see, the three cards from today's lesson are present in this group: Justice, Temperance and Strength (in many early decks "Fortitude" was used for the card's title). Only Prudence is missing from the

Tarot, although the earliest extant deck does not have any card titles, so it is possible that the virtue was given to a card but the image suggested something else to those who viewed it later. This term also has connotations of "practical wisdom" as opposed to "intellectual wisdom."

So from a medieval moralistic perspective, these cards may have had very significant associations:

Justice: The ability to be fair to all; a fair trial; the protection of the law as well as adherence to the law; punishment for wrongdoers and rewards for the virtuous; objectivity; moral rightness, ethics. This term also encompasses the proper ordering of people and actions in society.

Fortitude: In English, this word denotes something very different to the word "Strength." Fortitude indicates courage in the face of fear, pain, and suffering. It is the ability to stand up for oneself and for others, the force of will to persevere, and the practice of chivalry. Fortitude is as much an inner characteristic as it is an outward practice toward others. "Strength," on the other hand, may indicate might, firmness, rule over others, and physical capacity. However, we also talk of "strength of character" and "strength of will."

Temperance: Quite a complex concept, temperance on the surface simply indicates the ability to moderate one's behavior so that one does not practice lack of virtue or excess of it. It is a balance of one's temperament or nature on an external level. It is associated with the capacity to control oneself and govern one's feelings, appetites, and desires with the use of one's will and reason. Temperance was also discussed at length by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Thelemic Retellings

When Aleister Crowley created his Thoth Tarot with artist Lady Frieda Harris, he significantly changed some of the cards to fit the philosophy and concepts of Thelema. Crowley felt that some of the cards were portrayed in an "Old Aeon" fashion, displaying values and virtues that were no longer appropriate for the dawning New Aeon. We'll examine each of these cards

in turn, but keep in mind the traditional medieval concepts associated with them, for comparison purposes.

Justice: Adjustment

This card in the old pack was called Justice. This word has none but a purely human and therefore relative sense; so it is not to be considered as one of the facts of nature. Nature is not just, according to any theological or ethical idea; but Nature is exact.

Equilibrium stands apart from any individual prejudices [...] In this sense, Nature is unscrupulously just. It is impossible to drop a pin without exciting a corresponding reaction in every star. The action has disturbed the balance of the Universe.

-Aleister Crowley

The concept of human justice, reward, and punishment has been removed in favor of a universal principle of Nature (equilibrium) and the process by which equilibrium is maintained (adjustment). Crowley therefore identifies this card as the feminine partner of 0 The Fool-the chaos of the Fool and the order of Adjustment. He also associated this card with the Egyptian principle Ma'at-the order and equilibrium of the universe, but more importantly the sense of "the way things are." Further, Crowley believed that this card could be viewed as using the concept of Karma insofar as it represents the cause and effect of the universe.

* EXERCISE 7.I

How would you marry the two differing views of this card? How does human justice relate to the universal principle of equilibrium? Which view do you prefer for this card?

Strength: Lust

... it has been thought better to change the traditional title. Lust implies not only strength, but the joy of strength exercised. It is vigour, and the

rapture of vigour.

There is in this card a divine drunkenness or ecstasy. The woman is shown as more than a little drunk, and more than a little mad; and the lion also is aflame with lust. This signifies that the type of energy described is that of the primitive, creative order; it is completely independent of the criticism of reason. This card portrays the will of the Aeon.

-Aleister Crowley

The difference between Crowley's Lust card and the traditional Strength card can be illustrated by two formulas: that of St. George killing the Dragon, and that of Beauty and the Beast. In the former, St. George kills the dragon to save the damsel in distress, thus the woman and the beast are kept separate, and the woman is mild and powerless. In the latter, the woman herself falls in love with the Beast, and while in some versions of the tale the Beast becomes a man due to her love, in others the woman becomes a Beast as well. Thus, Lust relates more to the acceptance of the bestial lust and vigor for life, rather than the denial and destruction of its primal force.

Crowley's version of the card has an added layer that exploits the Christian image of the Whore of Babylon riding upon the Beast in the Book of Revelation, which forms the main image of the card. Here the card depicts the Thelemic concept of Babalon, the feminine principle of the Universe who accepts all, into whose cup the mystic desires to pour his blood (a symbol of giving oneself up to the Divine).

Temperance: Art

This card represents the Consummation of the Royal Marriage which took place in Atu VI [The Lovers]. The black and white personages are now united in a single androgyne figure.

The equilibrium and counter-change are carried out completely in the figure itself...

-Aleister Crowley

Instead of the medieval virtue pertaining to moderation, Crowley saw in this card an important stage in the alchemical process, in which the opposing matter of masculine/feminine, white/red, not only joined together as in the Lovers card, but further dissolved into one another to form a new, conglomerate matter. Thus, he renamed the card "Art," a term also used for alchemy.

The image on the card is of an androgynous figure bearing a mixture of symbolism from the Empress and Emperor cards (showing that the King and Queen therefore masculine and feminine have been united and dissolved into one), mixing fire and water in the alchemical cauldron upon which is the symbol of putrefaction (a raven atop a skull). Thus, not only did Crowley have this card represent the union of one with the other, but also the universal solvent known as Vitriol that completely dissolves all matter.

EXERCISE 7.2

In what way do you think the medieval virtue of moderation could be applied to the alchemical process that Crowley speaks of?

EXERCISE 7.3

Do a bit of research on the subject of alchemy. The Internet has a great variety of sources. In particular, look up the terms "vitriol," "marriage," and "putrefaction" in relation to this card.

XI Justice/VIII Adjustment

Justice, sometimes numbered 11 and sometimes 8, presents us with the image of a human figure presiding over the universe with the scales of balance and sword of truth. Often the figure is blindfolded, and his/her objectivity is clear. Here, the natural law of the universe wins out over the artificial laws of mankind (useful though they are!). "Nature, red in tooth and claw" cares little for morality or for equality, and always moves

forward to adjust itself to changing circumstances in order to maintain the equilibrium it needs to survive.

Who trusted God was love indeed And love Creation's final law Tho'
Nature, red in tooth and claw With ravine, shriek'd against his creed

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

It is not popular for people to philosophize that certain things are "the way things are." However, this is the thrust of the Justice/Adjustment card: there are "laws" (though the human term is insufficient) that govern the balance of the universe and will be enacted not through a human agent or an intelligent force but through continual cause and effect. The term "balance" is often applied to this card, but it does not signify balance in the sense of two things being equal or balancing each other out; rather it is in the sense of the natural flow of the universe working around us. However, at times the justice card-due to its image-can indicate human justice and judgments, though such judgments are often so objective that they can feel cruel and harsh.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Sword: The sword is a sharp and exacting instrument, in this case representing not only the swift reaction to an action but also the seemingly cruel way cause and effect works.

Blindfold: "Justice is blind" is a common saying. It refers to objectivity in a human sense, but in the non-human sense refers to the idea of "Nature, red in tooth and claw."

Pillars: Two pillars here may indicate the balance between two polarities.

Feather and heart: In Egyptian myth, after death one's heart was weighed against the feather (symbol) of Ma'at-if the heart was heavier it indicated that the deceased soul was weighed down by sin or sorrow, and was thus devoured by Sebek.

Scales: A symbol of balance, and of adjustment, of weighing up both sides.
Also a symbol of Libra.

Duality: Polarity and opposites that need a balancing point in between.
Every binary has such a point.

Courtroom: A human reflection of justice.

Crown: The authority of the law of cause and effect.

Alpha/Omega: Another binary, these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Together they indicate the complete encompassing of the entirety of existence by the laws of this card.

KEYWORDS: Justice, balance, judgment, trial, retribution, reward, punishment, truth, cosmic balance, Ma'at, law, cause and effect, objectivity, equality, adjustment, karma, fairness, choice, decision, polarity, necessity

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: One story of the great Hebrew King Solomon tells us of a dispute he resolved between two women who both claimed maternity of an infant. Solomon asked each woman to give her argument, but both women said the same-that they were the mother of the boy, and they loved him more than anything in the world. Solomon reached a solution he thought fair: the baby should be cut in half down the middle, and each woman would receive half, since each woman's claim was equally valid. At this, one woman fell to her knees before the King and begged him to let the other woman have the child whole-she could not bear to see him killed. From this, Solomon knew that she was the true birth mother, for she would rather the boy live safely with somebody else than see him dead.

Solomon's decision was cruel and swift, and demonstrates how impartiality and objectivity can bring about the natural order of things, but also how human feelings and rules can be crushed by this order.

As A PERSON: I have found it a rare occurrence that this card indicates a person in a reading. However, due to the image on the card it can sometimes signify a person practising law: a judge, lawyer, or advocate. A

Justice person is usually objective, cold, and applies reason to all matters in order to achieve the most balanced decision. Often, however, this decision does not consider the feelings of others-such things are considered flawed and too frail to matter. For the justice person, what matters most is reaching a conclusion swiftly and logically.

EXERCISE 7.4

- Take the justice card from your deck and examine the image and symbolism. This card is one that is very often different between decks, so carefully assess yours and see what you think of it. What symbols stand out? What colors? Does this version of justice highlight human law and judgment, or natural law and cause and effect?
- In your Tarot journal, write about an incident in your life when you may have experienced the blindness of cause and effect, or the sharp end of an objective decision. How do you feel about the justice system in your country?
- You can use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.

Questions for Journaling

- In which other cards do pillars appear? What do you think this represents for the meaning of the justice card?
- In what other cards does a sword appear, and what does this mean? How does this relate to the justice card?
- What does the concept of balance mean to you? How do you experience balance in your everyday life?
- Is balance the natural order of things, or is the Universe naturally unbalanced?
- Have you experienced a time of profound adjustment in your life? What happened? How did you approach the process of adjustment?

- What do you feel about the concept of Karma, or the Law of Cause and Effect?

VIII Strength/XI Lust

In some medieval decks, this card depicted Hercules battling the Nemean lion, and therefore indicated brute force and the suppression of the animal side of man. However, the most prevalent image was that of a young maiden taming a lion with a gentle hand, indicating the acceptance and useful harnessing of the animalistic instincts. Thus, the Strength card represents the lust and vigor for life, the indomitable strength and power of will, energy, and drive that pushes us onward to greater heights and enables us to achieve our goals and dreams.

A great deal of talent is lost to the world for want of a little courage.

-SYDNEY SMITH

This card also represents, as Crowley's Whore of Babalon does, the willingness to accept all that comes one's way: every opportunity and chance, every kindness, but also every pain and disappointment. Even these serve to teach us and make us stronger. The Strength card is also a card of courage and the ability to remain steadfast in your beliefs and way of life in the face of adversity. Finally, the beast that the maiden tames is an external representation of that fierce nature that for some comes out easily and for others needs to be coaxed out.

It is better to kill wasps with honey than with vinegar.

-ENGLISH PROVERB

COMMON SYMBOLS

Lion/beast: The animalistic nature, the fierce will to live within us all, the rising power. Sometimes called the Kundalini serpent.

Woman: The gentle nature, Beauty as opposed to the Beast.

Lemniscate: The symbol of infinity and power.

Flowers: Often decorate the maiden's hair, highlighting her gentle nature.

White: Purity, innocence, but also the blank into which all things can be accepted.

Riding a beast.- Provocative image of not only the taming but also the acceptance of the beast.

Babalon: See c.ii (Strength/Lust.) above.

KEYWORDS: Strength, courage, inner strength, lust, wholeness within yourself, conviction, kindness, gentility, strength of will, force, willpower, steadfastness, taming, beast within

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: Angela Carter's story "The Tiger's Bride" is a retelling of the famous fairy tale Beauty and the Beast. In the retelling, Beauty is lost to the figure called "Milord" in a game of cards by her father, and thus she is sent to live with him. Like Beauty and the Beast, they fall in love, but Beauty discovers Milord's true nature: he is a tiger who can transform himself into a human. Despite this (or because of it), Beauty becomes his bride, but Milord does not become human as in the fairy tale; but instead, Beauty becomes a tiger, exchanging her beautiful human skin for that of the animal.

As A PERSON: Energetic, strong-willed, forceful, with an outgoing personality, the Strength person is a sight to behold! They move through life with passion and courage, taking every opportunity that comes their way and taking life's knocks with dignity and strength of mind. This person tends to be in control of any situation and is often a strong leader. They can also be extremely sexual, reveling in their sexual energy and channeling it (along with their other energies) into their goal or focus.

* EXERCISE 7.5

- Take the Strength card from your deck and examine its image and symbolism. What figures are in the card? What relationship does this card portray between the human and the beast, if there is any? How do you feel about your deck's approach to the issues of this card-does it match your own feelings?
- In your Tarot journal, brainstorm the term "animal nature." What does it mean to you? What associations does it raise in your mind? Do you view it positively or negatively? How does this relate to the beast in the Strength card?
- You can use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What forms does strength take? What forms have you experienced?
- In what situations do you need these kinds of strength?
- Where does your own strength lie?
- How do you face adversity and difficulty?
- How do you react to your animalistic nature? Are you comfortable with it? Do you fear it? Do you revel in it? Do you use it or abuse it?
- If you could describe your animalistic nature as an animal, what would it be and why?
- Do you identify more with the beast or with the human character in the card?
- What areas of your life do you willingly give all your passion, lust, and vigor to?
- How does it feel for you to openly accept and channel your own strength and power into the external world?

- Read Angela Carter's "The Tiger's Bride," and "The Taming of Mr. Lyon" (in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*). In your journal, comment on these questions: How do they tell the same story, and in what ways do they tell a different story? How do you see the two different conclusions? How does this relate to the differing approaches to the Strength card?

XIV Temperance/Art

What was once separated from itself, split into "one" and "the other", naturally yearns to be reunited with the other. This is the mystery of the Lovers card: "I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union." Temperance is the following process wherein the yearning is fulfilled and the opposing forces mingle together to create something new, and greater than the sum of its parts. Here, the spermatozoa and ovum unite and cause chemical processes to occur which lead to cell splitting, growth, and finally a new child. Here the red and white, the masculine and feminine, the fire and water, unite into the androgyne.

All things in moderation, including moderation.

One foot in sea and one on shore: to one thing constant never.

-WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,

Much Ado About Nothing

Visit the interior parts of the earth; by rectification you shall find the hidden stone.

The Temperance card is one of immense creativity, but also of dissolution. The two forces that unite cannot do so if they remain wholly themselves-they must dissolve first. It requires us to break down the polarities in our lives and bring them together. Once we achieve a conglomeration of the disparate forces and influences, we will find ourselves more productive and creative. Moderation is needed in this endeavor, insofar as too much of one polarity and not enough of another causes the alchemy of our lives to fail.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Eagle/lion: The eagle and lion are alchemical symbols for fire and water or masculine and feminine. In the early stages of alchemy, the lion is red and the eagle white-in the Temperance card they are opposite colors, showing that they have taken on the each other's qualities.

Red/white: Symbols of masculine/feminine, active/passive.

Man/woman: These do not indicate the physical gender, but the spiritual qualities of masculine/feminine.

Fire/water: Another symbol of the polarities above. Fire is the most active, masculine element and water the most passive, feminine element. Together they represent the perpetual giving and receiving of energies in the universe.

Cauldron: It is in the cauldron-the divine womb-that the uniting of the polarities takes place. It also represents the earth, and therefore the alchemical process illustrated in medieval texts as the Divine King and Queen being buried beneath the earth to decay/dissolve into each other. They emerge from the tomb as an hermaphrodite.

Bees/snakes: In the Thoth deck, the Empress wears bees on her clothes and the Emperor snakes. In the Art card, the hermaphrodite wears both, indicating that the Sacred Marriage has taken place between the two cards as Divine Masculine and Divine Feminine.

Raven on skull: An alchemical symbol of the process of putrefaction and thus dissolution.

Rainbow: In alchemy, after the process of putrefaction has taken place the alchemists observed a rainbow of colors forming in their alchemical container. In modern decks, it also indicates the veil of Paraketh, which separates and blocks the sphere of Tiphareth (Beauty) with the highest sphere of Kerber (Crown)thus, the Temperance card brings the initiate to the highest achievement of Godhead.

Arrow: Symbol of Sagittarius, and the arrow that pierces the rainbow veil of Para- keth, allowing the initiate to pass through.

Angel: The agency of the Divine performing the union, the higher self; a shadow of the Godhead that the initiate wishes to obtain.

Irises: A symbol of the Greek messenger Goddess Iris, who was traditionally associated with the rainbow.

Crown/sun: The Godhead that is being sought after the Sacred Marriage. The ultimate Oneness.

KEYWORDS: Temperance, moderation, alchemy, art, mixing, mingling, melting pot, polarities mixed, testing, manipulation, adapting, fluidity, flexibility, dissolution

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: Clark Kent, the journalist behind Superman, has to live two different lives. He lives in two different worlds and manages to mingle the two revealing his identity as Superman. His life as Superman influences that of Clark Kent, and vice versa. However, he cannot allow himself to give in to extremes, since by doing so he may accidentally give himself away. Naturally he has to moderate his life and his actions in order to carry on living in the two different worlds effectively.

As A PERSON: The Temperance person displays a moderation in life, personality, and choice that can sometimes be so moderate it seems extreme! Rarely can they be found espousing one philosophy forcefully over another, for instance. They like to lead a well-balanced, holistic life. They can also be mystics intent on moving beyond duality and uniting with Godhead. Given their proclivity for mixing differing things to create something new in the melting pot of life, they make excellent cooks and bakers!

* EXERCISE 7.6

- Take the Temperance card from your deck and examine the imagery and symbolism. Does your deck focus more on the virtue of

moderation than on the concept of alchemy and the cosmic melting pot? How do you feel about this? How does your card illustrate these meanings?

- In your Tarot journal write down some examples you can think of where you or others have created something unique by mixing two very different techniques, influences, ideas, etc.
- Try baking bread by hand for a bit of modern-day alchemy. Note how the tiniest disproportion of yeast, water, flour, or heat can bring failure to the loaf. Be aware of the many processes that are occurring as the ingredients react to each other in such a dynamic way. And then eat it while it's still warm-yum!
- You can use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.
- To fully understand this card from the perspective of the Thoth deck, and get to grips with some of the more advanced symbolism, read as much as you can on alchemy, in particular the imagery. See the Further Reading list below for some suggestions.

Questions for Journaling

- How would you go about mingling polar opposites?
- Have you experienced a need for alchemy in your life? What was it?
- Where do you most need to moderate your life? In what way?
- What polar opposites exist within your personality? How do they interact within you and in your actions? Do they work together or against each other?
- In what way are you a melting pot for the influences and forces in the external world? How does this manifest?

Alchemical Roses

You may notice in some Tarot decks the symbol of the rose recurring frequently, in different colors. The rose is a symbol used in alchemy to signify different states of being, and since many Tarot deck creators were familiar with this symbolism it is useful to be aware of it.

Red: Passion, love, vitality, masculine/active energy, creativity

Pink: Gentleness, softness, thankfulness, friendship, the mixture between red and white

Orange: Enthusiasm, fascination, optimism, vital energy, confidence

Yellow: Compassion, conversation, joy, security, social affairs, the intellect

Blue: Spiritual longing, promise of a perfect world, the impossible

White: Purity, innocence, acceptance, feminine or passive energy, initiation

Black: End of love, disaster, depression, death, illness, withered dreams

Golden: Completion, perfection of oneself, invocation, attainment

The Great Rite Alchemy Spread

This spread is inspired by the process of alchemy in the Temperance card, and is a useful means of assessing yourself spiritually, but can also be used to give answers to specific questions-especially in cases where two opposites or extremes are pulling upon you in a given situation.

One triangle in the spread is the masculine, the other feminine. They unite in the hexagram. Cards 1, 3, and 6 are masculine cards; Cards 2, 4, and 5 are feminine cards.

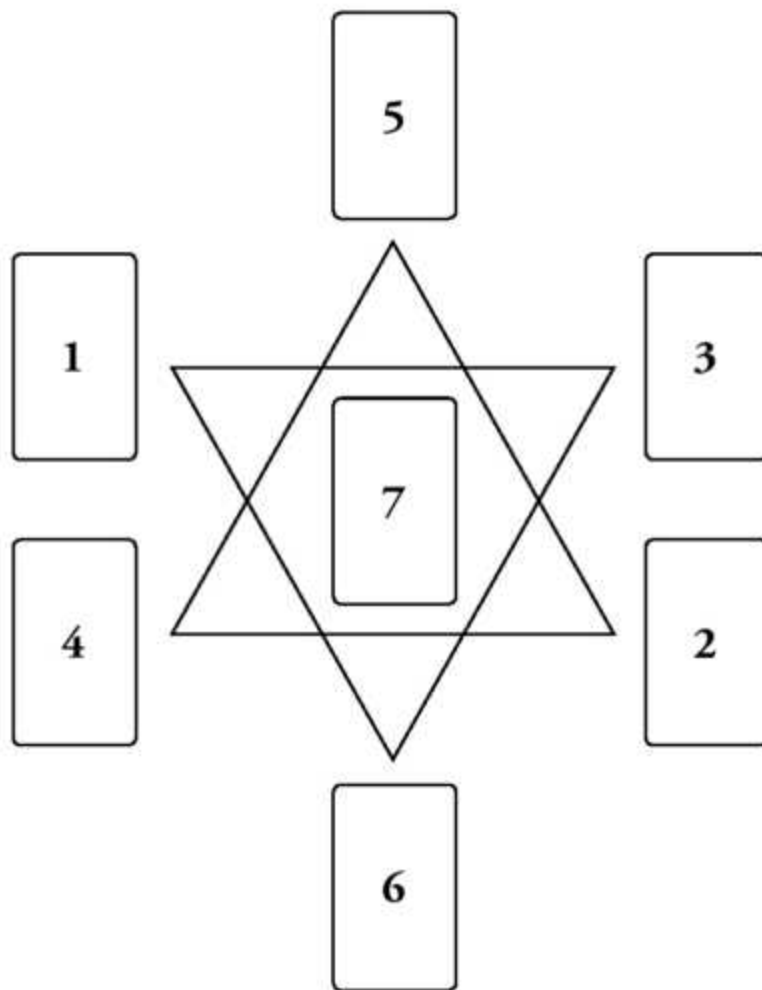
Card 1. Masculine: The essence of your masculine, active, giving, outward side.

Card 2. Feminine: The essence of your feminine, passive, receptive, inward side.

Card 3. Masculine: What your masculine self gives to your feminine self.

Card 4. Feminine: What your feminine self gives to your masculine self.

Card 5. Masculine: The negative aspects of your masculine self



Great Rite Alchemy Spread

Card 6. Feminine: The negative aspects of your feminine self

Card 7. (This can be 1, 2, or 3 cards) The Alchemical Wedding.- How the masculine and feminine parts of yourself can mingle to create something new.

Optional: Eighth card indicating the thing created through the Alchemical Wedding.

Optional Homework

- Do Tarot journal entries for one or all of the above cards, in particular focusing on your own reaction to them and ideas.
- For next lesson, think about the issues of fate vs. free will, and see if you can come up with some ideas on the subject.

Further Reading

Nichomachean Ethics, by Aristotle, is the origin of the Golden Mean giving rise to the medieval virtue of Temperance.

Eudemian Ethics, by Aristotle-see above.

The Book of Thoth, by Aleister Crowley, is slightly more advanced, but essential for understanding the Thoth tradition.

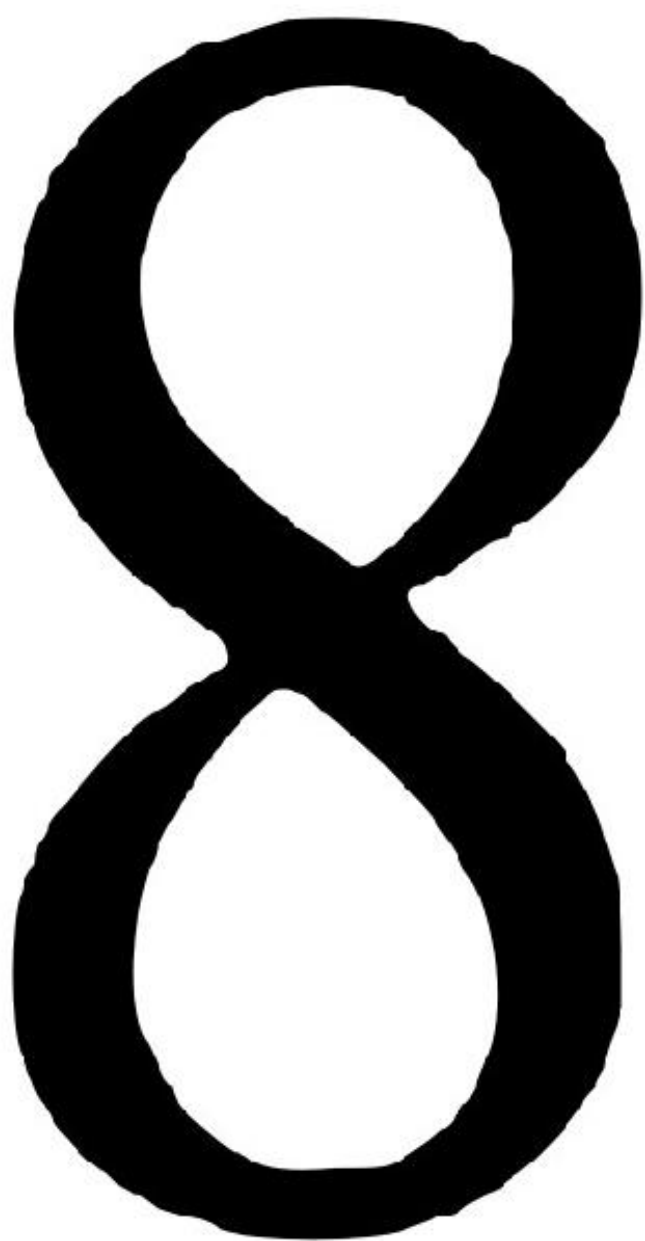
Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot, by Lon Milo DuQuette, is a simpler guide to the Thoth tradition, without Crowley's difficult writing style! More suited to beginners.

The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories, by Angela Carter, for the stories recommended in Strength.

The Complete Idiots Guide to Alchemy, by Dennis William Hauck, is an excellent starting point for those wishing to learn about alchemy.

The Alchemy Reader, edited by Stanton J. Linden, is a more advanced guide to alchemy, containing all the source texts.

<http://www.levity.com/alchemy/> is a website with plenty of image galleries and great information.



THE MAJOR ARCANA:
CYCLICAL THINGS

Abstract Concepts in the Tarot

There comes a point in the Major Arcana where the cards don't seem to be indicating mundane experience anymore. Instead they represent universal, abstract concepts and forces that many of us experience only once, and which can also be a fearful idea for most people. This is not because they are genuinely painful or evil, but because they represent the unknown: XIII Death is the natural decay and destruction that we must all physically undergo at the end of our lives, as well as the natural decay necessary in our everyday lives that urges us to let go of the unnecessary; X The Wheel of Fortune is chance, risk, fate, free will, and the perpetual stability of change; XXI The World is rebirth, endings and beginnings, dissolution and manifestation together.

Such abstract concepts in the Tarot enable us to hold in our hands a more complete microcosm. However, they can also be difficult to grasp when first learning Tarot, due to their almost otherworldly nature. Don't let this dishearten you or prevent you from learning! Even if such cards appear in a reading and you're stumped, don't worry-even the most advanced readers at times have mind blanks and can't see the relation to cards to a reading. The best advice you can take is to persevere and just do as many practice readings as possible-you will learn the card meanings better through experience and recognition.

Fate vs. Free Will

The issue of fate vs. free will is one that every Tarot reader must face in the course of their development. Your view on the matter dictates your reasons for reading and your approach to delivering a reading.

Do we act freely from our conscious decisions? Are we influenced by something else-other people, our genetics, our upbringing, God? And to what extent do these influences affect us? Some people believe that a destiny or fate has been planned for us or given to us at birth, or that it develops as we go through life. These people may believe that some force dictates how we get to our destiny as well as the destiny itself, while others

may believe that we choose how we reach the pre-planned fate. There are those who don't believe in fate or destiny at all, but hold that meaning is given to our lives through our interpretation and interaction with the world: we create our own destinies through our choices. Some people believe a mixture of these things, for instance the philosopher Voltaire, who said:

Each player must accept the cards life deals him or her. But once they are in hand, he or she alone must decide how to play the cards in order to win the game.

Personally I feel that in order to read Tarot it is useful to believe that choice and free will exist to some extent: this allows our readings to go beyond foretelling fixed futures that cannot be changed, and therefore gives Tarot a purpose. It allows us to gain insight into our likely path so that we may change it if we wish. However, it is also important to see and accept that our past has an effect on our present, in various ways and to various extents depending on the action or situation. Effects always have causes. Similarly, our present choices and actions will affect our futures, and thus the future is always in motion.

EXERCISE 8.1

Take a while to examine your beliefs about fate, free will, destiny, and choice. In particular, try to think about how your beliefs reflect upon the workings and use of Tarot. This may bring up further ideas about why and how you read Tarot, and if you like you can review Exercise 1.3. (where you created your Mission Statement) and see if you want to change it or add anything new.

Your Birth Card and Year Card

Since this lesson will be dealing with cards of cycles, endings, and beginnings, it would be useful to explore the concepts of birth cards and year cards here. Using numerology in addition to Tarot, modern Tarot readers have created a means of calculating what we now call Birth cards and Year cards. Similar to zodiac signs or numerological calculations

regarding one's name, they can be handy hints at a person's character or the year they are having.

Birth Card/Soul Card

Like your sun sign and rising sign, the birth card is an indication of your overall personality at birth and the influences upon your character throughout life.

To calculate your Birth Card add the month and date of birth (for example, July 17th becomes 7/17, so $7 + 17$) to the year of your birth (Example: $7 + 17 = 24$. $24 + 1984 = 2008$). You then add up the separate digits of the final number until you reduce it to a number less than 22 ($2 + 0 + 0 + 8 = 10$) That number is the number of the Major Arcana card that is your Birth Card (Note: 22 = The Fool.)

You will naturally find that your reduced number can be reduced further. For instance, $2 + 0 + 0 + 8 = 10$, and $1 + 0 = 1$.

Pairings and sets are:

1 = Magician

2 = High Priestess

3 = Empress

4 = Emperor

5 = Hierophant

6 = Lovers

7 = Chariot

8 = Strength

9 = Hermit

10 = Wheel + Magician
11 = Justice + High Priestess
12 = Hanged Man + Empress
13 = Death + Emperor
14 = Temperance + Hierophant
15 = Devil + Lovers
16 = Tower + Chariot
17 = Star + Strength
18 = Moon + Hermit
19 = Sun + Wheel + Magician
20 = Judgement + High Priestess
21 = World + Empress
22 = Fool

If your number is 10 or 1, it is sometimes assumed that you have the triplicate set of Magician, Wheel and the Sun, because 1 and 10 are reduced versions of 19. If you have 21 (World and Empress), the Hanged Man is viewed as a hidden aspect, since it is an expression of 3, the Empress.

There are other formulas out there for calculating the Birth card, and mostly they give the same answer. For example, your calculation could be done in pairs of numbers, as per the Tarot School method. Using the same birth date above: $7 + 17 + 19 + 84 = 127$, $12 + 7 = 19$. Here, we get the same triplicity of Magician/Wheel/ Sun, but from 19 instead of 10.

Year Card

The Year card tells us what kind of year this will be for a person. Unlike chronological years it does not begin at January 1st each year, but rather from the person's last birthday. The calculation method is the same as above for the Birth/Soul card. So, for my 25th year on this earth I calculate: $7 + 17$ (Date of birthday) + 2008 (Year of last birthday) = 2032 = 7 (Chariot). I am also moving into another year $7 + 17 + 2009 = 8$ (Strength or Justice). Note that you do not always progress through the cards from 1-22, as due to the mathematics you may have cycles. In 2003, I was in an 11 year, 2004 a 12 year, 2005 a 13 year, but 2006 was a 5 year.

+ 2009 = 8 (Strength or Justice). Note that you do not always progress through the cards from 1-22, as due to the mathematics you may have cycles. In 2003, I was in an 11 year, 2004 a 12 year, 2005 a 13 year, but 2006 was a 5 year.

Name Card

Want to know what kind of name you have? Numerology has, for centuries, been used to analyze names and their nature. Since each Major Arcana card has a number assigned to it, why not add Tarot to the numerology of names?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

Each letter of the alphabet is assigned a number, and you simply add the numbers of your name together to get a figure. Example: K (2) + I (9) + M (4) = 15 = 6. My shortened name is Devil + Lovers. However, my birth name (Kimberley) is $46 = 10 = 1$, Wheel + Magician. Since you will have different names in different areas of your life (birth name, full name,

surname, baptismal name, professional name, nom de plume, nickname, pet name, online alias ...), you will have different personalities in those areas.

EXERCISE 8.2

Calculate your own Birth, Year, and Name cards! You could also calculate Year cards for the previous few years and reflect on what happened during those years-does it relate to the cards you have calculated? Calculate what Year card you will move into on your next birthday. An internet search will reveal information on the Year and Birth cards and what the sets and pairings mean. In particular, the Tarot School has some excellent notes (www.tarotschool.com/BirthCards.html).

Rotary Mysteries, the Sphinx's Riddle, and Ezekiel's Vision

There are a number of symbols common to the Wheel of Fortune and World cards that many decks retain no matter how different from the Rider-Waite deck they are! These symbols are puzzling to the beginner since they have their origins in Biblical history, ancient Mesopotamia, and Greek mythology.

Letters usually appear around the wheel on the Wheel of Fortune card. Some interpreters have connected the four elements, four suits, and four holy letters in the Tetragrammaton (fourfold name of God, YHVH) to the four letters upon the wheel.

In medieval imagery, the "Wheel of Fortune" is a frequently used motif. Often the wheel is depicted with three male figures around its circumference: a king sitting atop the wheel, a young man climbing up one side toward the king, and an old man falling down the other side. From each of their mouths come words, the king saying how it is great to rule, being unaware of mortality or the precarious nature of his position; the young man saying he will be ruling shortly; and the old man lamenting how he once ruled but does so no longer. These three figures can also be related to the three ages of man in the Sphinx's riddle (below.) In the Visconti Sforza,

Tarot these figures are four in number, with an additional very old man in white at the bottom of the wheel.

The prominent figure of the sphinx atop the Wheel of Fortune is also an important symbol. The Greek story of Oedipus gives us an account of the sphinx's power to hold people at bay with riddles, the most famous one (which Oedipus answered correctly) being, "Which creature in the morning goes on four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening upon three?" The answer is "Man," who as an infant crawls on all fours, as a man in the noon of his life walks on two legs, and as an elder in the evening of his life uses a crutch. The story (which was in circulation well before Sophocles penned his famous plays *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus* in the fifth century BCE) also highlights the struggle between fate and free will that is a common theme in Greek tragedy.

EXERCISE 8.3

Read the story of Oedipus, either in Sophocles' play or online. Wikipedia's article retells the story and shows its development over time from writer to writer. Ask yourself how you think it portrays man's attempt to be free of his destiny. How do you feel about this?

The sphinx has also been used by occultists over the centuries as a symbol of many things. "The Four Powers of the Sphinx" were written about by Eliphas Levi in the 19th century, and further elaborated by Crowley in *Magick Without Tears*. They have been adopted into many Neo-Pagan traditions, and have found their way into the Tarot: around the Wheel of Fortune and the figure in the World card can be seen four strange creatures: a bull, lion, eagle, and man, sometimes writing in books, often winged. Crowley writes of the sphinx and these animals:

It [the sphinx] is thus a Glyph of the Satisfaction and Perfection of the Will and of the Work, the completion of the True Man as the Reconciler of the Highest with the Lowest, so for our Convenience conventionally to distinguish them. This then is the Adept, who doth Will with solid Energy as the Bull, doth dare with fierce Courage as

the Lion, doth know with swift Intelligence as the Man, and doth keep Silence with soaring Subtlety as the Eagle or Dragon. Moreover, this Sphinx is an Eidolon of the Law, for the Bull is Life, the Lion is Light, the Man is Liberty, the Serpent is Love.

-Aleister Crowley, Liber Aleph-De Natura

Thus he also gives to the four powers the four elements, and therefore the four suits of the Tarot:

To Know: Air, Swords or Air + Man

To Will: Fire, Wands or Earth + Bull

To Dare: Water, Cups or Fire + Lion

To Be Silent: Earth, Discs or Water + Eagle

Note that the four symbols of the Tarot suits can often be seen on the table of the Magician card—we can interpret him as possessing all four powers as his resources. Crowley also identifies the sphinx (which is both beast and human) as a symbol of the perfection of the union of Babylon and the Beast (see Lesson 7), therefore somebody who has fully integrated all aspects of himself.

The bull, man, eagle, and lion appear early on in history, with one reference found in the Old Testament. In the passage on Ezekiel's Vision (Ezekiel 1:1-19) four creatures (Hebrew: cherubim) appeared to Ezekiel bearing wheels (Hebrew: ophanim), and each creature had four faces: that of a lion, a bull, an eagle, and a man. They were winged and had hooves, and were bronze in color. The wheels that the cherubim accompanied developed in later Hebrew thought to indicate the only constant in the universe: change. They became symbols of the ever-present movement and cycles of the world and the ever-changing nature of the universe and God. By the time of the New Testament, they had become symbols of the four evangelists and the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

* EXERCISE 8.4

Read Ezekiel 1:1-19 and focus on the images of the cherubim and their wheels. Compare this to the Wheel of Fortune and World cards.

X The Wheel of Fortune

The title of the Wheel of Fortune brings to mind ideas of risk, fate, and chance. As we go through life, we rise and fall, succeed and fail, experience ups and downs, and we don't always have control over them. We also experience the power of change and the constant movement of the universe around us, whether it be through the changing seasons, our aging, the births and deaths of family and friends, music suddenly sounding like noise, fashion evolving, or technology improving. Sometimes we can feel like our world is rushing around us and we're trying to keep up with it, being dragged along by the momentum. Sometimes we also try to prevent change and stop things from moving-anybody who has tried this will know how impossible it is.

The only thing certain is change.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

The courage to change the things I can,

And the wisdom to know the difference.

The Wheel of Fortune tells us that the only thing in life that is certain is change. It reminds us that change is inevitable and constant. But it also represents the wheel of samsara from Indian philosophy-reincarnation and suffering. If we continue to revolve on the outside of the wheel we will suffer, get dizzy, and get caught up in everything. But when we move toward the center of the wheel-toward the infinitesimally small point that is also no-point, we find ourselves rising above the mad rush around us. This card advises us to accept the constant change around us and accept our own changes, but also find the still, silent center that enables us to stop. It also reminds us to take risks, chances, and gamble a little with our security, and

asks us whether we are free or instead controlled by the hand of Fortune turning the wheel upon which we ride.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Wheel: Change, movement, cycles.

Four creatures (cherubim): See Rotary Mysteries above.

Hand: The hand of Fate. A symbol of that which we cannot control, and the perpetual cause of change.

Human figures around the wheel: the king that sometimes appears as been described above; sometimes men and women are depicted on the outside of the wheel, about to fall off the edge as a mysterious hand turns it-this indicates circumstances out of our control.

ROTA: See Rotary Mysteries above.

Sphinx: See Rotary Mysteries above.

Serpent and jackal-headed figure, or monkey: Otherwise called Typhon and Anubis, together with the Sphinx these figures represent the three Gunas of Hindu philosophy-three forms of energy that cause change to occur. They are called Sattvas (darkness, inertia, and ignorance), Rajas (energy, fire, and activity), and Tamas (calm, intelligence, and passivity). Where any one of these predominates, change and movement continue.

Dice/cards: Chance, luck, and gambling.

Seasons: Some modern decks illustrate the procession of change through the movement of the four seasons, an evocative symbol of continual change that we experience every day.

Zodiac: Like the seasons, the cycle of the zodiac indicates perpetual change in the universe around us.

KEYWORDS: Fortune, fate, chance, gambling, risk, change, movement, riddles, center-point, spinning.

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: The story of Oedipus trying to enact his free will in the face of fate is a good example of the Wheel of Fortune; similarly the Greek tragedy of Orpheus shows another mortal trying to take risks and change the hand that fate has dealt him. Both stories end with failure on the part of the mortals, but they praise the fact that by trying to change things the mortals did achieve something. Although the end may have been the same, the path was their own choice.

As A PERSON: Any person indicated by this card is a gambler, a risk-taker, with a personality and life as fluid as a waterfall. They change extremely rapidly, and others around them find it hard to keep up with them. They also rush through life and their projects quickly, but have a tendency to get caught up in the change that is occurring around them and may find it difficult to focus.

EXERCISE 8.5

- Take the Wheel of Fortune from your deck and examine the images and symbols. Has your deck chosen to depict the cycles of change through natural symbolism, like the seasons and zodiac? Through the ages of man? Through the biblical symbolism explored above? How does this fit the deck's theme?
- Research briefly the Hindu Gunas and how they are expressed in everyday life. You can also research further the symbolism of the Sphinx: it has origins even older than Egypt or Greece.
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- How much control do we have over our lives?
- Does Fate govern our lives, or does free will?

- How would you define Destiny?
- What symbols do you see in the card, and what do they mean to you?
- Where on the Wheel would you be? On top, climbing up, falling down, or at the bottom?
- How do you perceive the Four Powers of the Sphinx? (Know, Will, Dare, Be Silent.)
- What do you think it would feel like to be spinning on the outside of the wheel? What about on the very center-point of the wheel?

La Danse Macabre

La Danse Macabre (the Dance of Death) is a medieval European pictorial allegory for the inevitable. It depicts the personification of Death (or many dead figures) leading people from all walks of life, rank, and age in a dance, calling them to death. This image is found throughout Europe and was particularly prevalent during the Black Death and other plagues, since death was so close to everybody. The image reminded its viewers that they would die no matter what they did in life, no matter how rich or powerful they were. Often, the figure of Death speaks to those he is dancing with, admonishing them and telling them there is nothing they can do to avert their end. In the first printed Totentanz textbook (approximately 1460), Death addresses, for example, the emperor:

Emperor, your sword won't help you out
 Sceptre and crown are worthless here
 I've taken you by the hand
 For you must come to my dance.

Such images may have given rise to the appearance of memento moris on headstones and in churchyards: skulls or skeletons depicted speaking to the

reader, telling them, "What you are, we once were. What we are, you one day will be." Such images as La Danse Macabre and memento mori, while frightening to look at, remind us that death and endings are inevitable. It is no surprise, then, to find in many Tarot decks that the Death card depicts a skeletal horse rider or Grim Reaper riding through a group of people from different parts of society: a king, a priest, a young woman, and a child. Each meets death in a different way, but he/she meets death nonetheless.

XIII Death

Not only does the Tarot tell us, through the Wheel of Fortune, that change is the only constant in the universe, it also tells us, through Death, that the end is inevitable. Whether it be the end of our own lives, the end of the Universe, or the end of humankind, everything meets death in the end. However, the Death in this card is not a violent, destructive end: it is a natural decay that occurs around us all the time. (The violent change can be seen in XVI The Tower.) Every second, our cells are breaking down and being replaced by new ones. In a seven-year period, our entire body has swapped every cell and we are biologically not the same. Death and decay are necessary for stability-without them, species overpopulate, waste matter is not produced or broken down. The decay of dead animals and plant matter creates fossil fuels and fertilizer for new plants.

The night kissed the fading day With a whisper: `I am death, your mother, From me you will get new birth. "

-RABINDRANATH TAGORE

In a metaphorical sense, death is also necessary throughout our lives to initiate change and evolution. Various stages in our lives end; our childhood ends to make way for adulthood; jobs we no longer want (and sometimes jobs we do!) end and often provide us with opportunities for a career change; stale or destructive relationships end freeing us from emotional pain. Not all endings are welcome, however, but if we view them as opening up new opportunities, as removing obstacles and blockages, we can work with the changes and make the most of them.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Death/Grim Reaper: A personification of the forces of death and decay, common to nearly all cultures.

Scythe: Death's traditional weapon. Also used in farming to cut down larger crops so that they may be harvested-the death of the crops is necessary for further survival and cultivation.

White horse: From the Book of Revelation 6:7-8, in which Death is one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and rides a pale horse.

Flag with white rose. White is the color of perfection and innocence, and also of the state of nothingness that arises from decay.

Dying figures: Usually many people from different ranks in society. Death comes to all.

Water. The elemental attribution of Death is water. It sometimes appears in cards as a vast ocean or a river. As a river, it recalls the mythological river Styx across which the dead were ferried to the afterlife. Many cultures believe that the dead have to cross a great body of water or live beneath it.

Scorpion/eagle/serpent: three different levels of the zodiacal sign Scorpio (attributed to Death). The scorpion is the most mundane of the three, and due to the myth of it stinging itself to death if threatened, it represents the tendency of people to destroy themselves and give up in the face of death or pain; the serpent is the second lowest and represents physical sexuality; the eagle is the highest and has risen above the mire of attachment to the physical world.

Sunset/sunrise: Difficult to tell apart in Tarot artwork, the sunrise and sunset indicate both endings and new beginnings, as well as another example of natural cycles.

Butterfly: The caterpillar builds a chrysalis around itself in which it is dissolved, and from this solution forms a butterfly, an example of rebirth.

Phoenix. A symbol of rebirth, when the long-lived phoenix dies it bursts into flames, and a new phoenix egg emerges from the ashes.

KEYWORDS: Death, change, mutation, stirring up, destruction, cycles, seasons, endings, rebirth, transition, incubation, decay, release, metamorphosis.

IN FILM AND LITERATURE: A folktale from the British Isles tells us of a personification of the corn or barley, John Barleycorn. It tells how three men came from the West to cut him down, crush his body, drown him, and powder his bones-they then turned the powder into bread and beer for the community to eat and drink. In a Welsh tale, a young boy accidentally steals wisdom from the hag Cerridwen, and she pursues him across the countryside in a shape-shifting contest. Eventually he turns into a grain of corn and she into a hen, and consumes him. However, he grows in her belly and is born nine months later as the famous Bard, Taliesin.

As A PERSON: A Death person is morbid! Constantly aware of their own mortality and that of everyone around them, they can often dwell on the inevitable. They may also have a black sense of humor, but despite their morbidity they are immense fun to be around! Since they are aware of the nearness of death, they take every chance offered and try to help everyone around them live their lives to the fullest while they still can.

* EXERCISE 8.6

- Take the Death card from your deck and examine the image and symbols. How has your deck expressed the themes of the card? Is it frightening to look at or welcoming?
- Read The Book of Taliesin in the Mabinogion (a medieval Welsh manuscript). How does it reflect the theme of natural decay and acceptance of death? How is transformation portrayed in it?

- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What forms may death take in your life?
- What forms of death have you experienced?
- What symbols do you see in the card and what do they mean?
- Do any phrases or sayings come to your mind when you look at this card?
- Are there any symbols in this card that you see in other cards? How do these cards link?
- The numbers 1 + 3 add up to 4, The Emperor. How do these two cards relate?
- When was the last time you experienced dramatic change?
- In what ways have you experienced transition?

XXI The World

When we reach the World at the end of the Major Arcana, we also find the end of a cycle and the completion of everything. But the World is not just a card of endings and finality-it is a card of beginnings and manifestation.

Each time you complete an act of creation, you focus a life force. And since life begets life, this energy seeks to enlarge its expression through new creation. In this stage of completion, your being is ready for another act of creation.

-ROBERT FRITZ

Every ending is also a beginning. In the perpetual motion of the universe and the evolution of every individual soul and that of humanity is a cycle of

endings leading to beginnings and beginnings leading to endings. Manifestation is a direct cause of dissolution, as we see in XIV Temperance (see Lesson 7) and dissolution is the eventual result of manifestation. In a sense, the World card is not only this cycle of manifestation, but also the release from it, the dance of the temporal world and the lessons we learn at the end of every cycle. The World represents the synthesis of all our wanderings and new experiences: we bring together all the elements into a solid foundation for further development.

Accompanying this is an irrepressible joy and triumph, an invitation to join the eternal dance.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Wreath: Representing triumph, a wreath is often made of laurel. A laurel wreath was the prize for the winner of the Olympics in ancient Greece.

Hermaphrodite: Can symbolize both the union and synthesis of all one's aspects and resources into a single understanding, as well as the dividing of one's nature at the beginning of a new journey.

Four cherubim: See Ezekiel's Vision on page 118.

Four elements: See Ezekiel's Vision on page 118.

Triax: In the Thoth deck, this is a symbol of spirit-a combination of all four elements. It indicates synthesis of all four to create a higher understanding.

Jumping.- "Jumping for joy." The figure in this card is often depicted leaping through the wreath that looks like a giant "0"- the number of the Fool card. This shows that the end of the Major Arcana cycles naturally back to the beginning.

Sickle: The zodiacal symbol of Saturn, the sign of endings and cycles.

Dancing.- Manifestation, the energy of the universe around us; triumph and joy.

KEYWORDS: Completion, success, victory, unity, integration, understanding, realization, divinity incarnate, Godhead, achievement, enlightenment, creation, cosmic dance, cycles, new beginnings, endings

IN FILM AND LITERATURE: In The Matrix, the protagonist Neo reaches a final acceptance and understanding of his role as "The One." Upon death he realizes that even death is an illusion ("there is no spoon..."), and thus he is able to enact his will upon the world in any way he chooses-in this case, stopping bullets and entering the body of Agent Smith to shatter it. At the end of the film, Neo has reached the highest state of spiritual awareness possible for that journey. This heralds in a new cycle and the beginning of a new journey, which he faces in the following films in the trilogy.

As A PERSON: This card less often indicates a personality and more often indicates where somebody is in their life. They have been working hard on a project/journey for a long time, and they are now at the end of it. They are wise and know how to use all the energy and resources around them to create what they wish. They are balanced individuals who prefer not to be tied down by society's codes and conventions, and they have a very high level of understanding when it comes to spiritual matters. However, they realize that there is always room within themselves for evolution and they are always searching for new insights and understanding.

EXERCISE 8.7

- Take the World card from your deck and examine the imagery and symbolism. What symbols strike you? How do they make you feel and what do you think this means in relation to the card?
- Take up a project, no matter how small. It could be something as simple as writing a letter to a family friend or cleaning your house. It could be as dedicated as painting a picture, creating a magical tool, organizing an event, or learning a new language. Keep a diary about

your progress. When you have finished, celebrate! Have a party. How do you feel about the completion?

- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 in relation to this card.

Questions for Journaling

- Are there any symbols in this card that are found in other cards? How does this link the cards?
- Are there any phrases, sayings, or words that come into your mind when you look at this card?
- How do you feel when you look at this card?
- What does completion mean to you?
- What are your experiences of completion?
- What is the highest goal for you? Where are you eventually aiming to be?
- How do you think human beings can achieve a realization of the Divine?
- How do you feel when you reach a state of sudden understanding and completeness?
- Why do you think that this card is associated with achieving the Divine, but also with the manifest universe?

The Wheel of the Year Tarot Spread

This spread is designed for use as a "What's in store for me this coming year?" spread, but it is slightly different from the usual month-by-month round-up spread. Instead of having cards representing each month of the year it focuses on the themes that will run through the querent's life for the next twelve months, and can also be used at any time of the year. It

highlights the cycles and journeys, and the development of them in the querent's life.

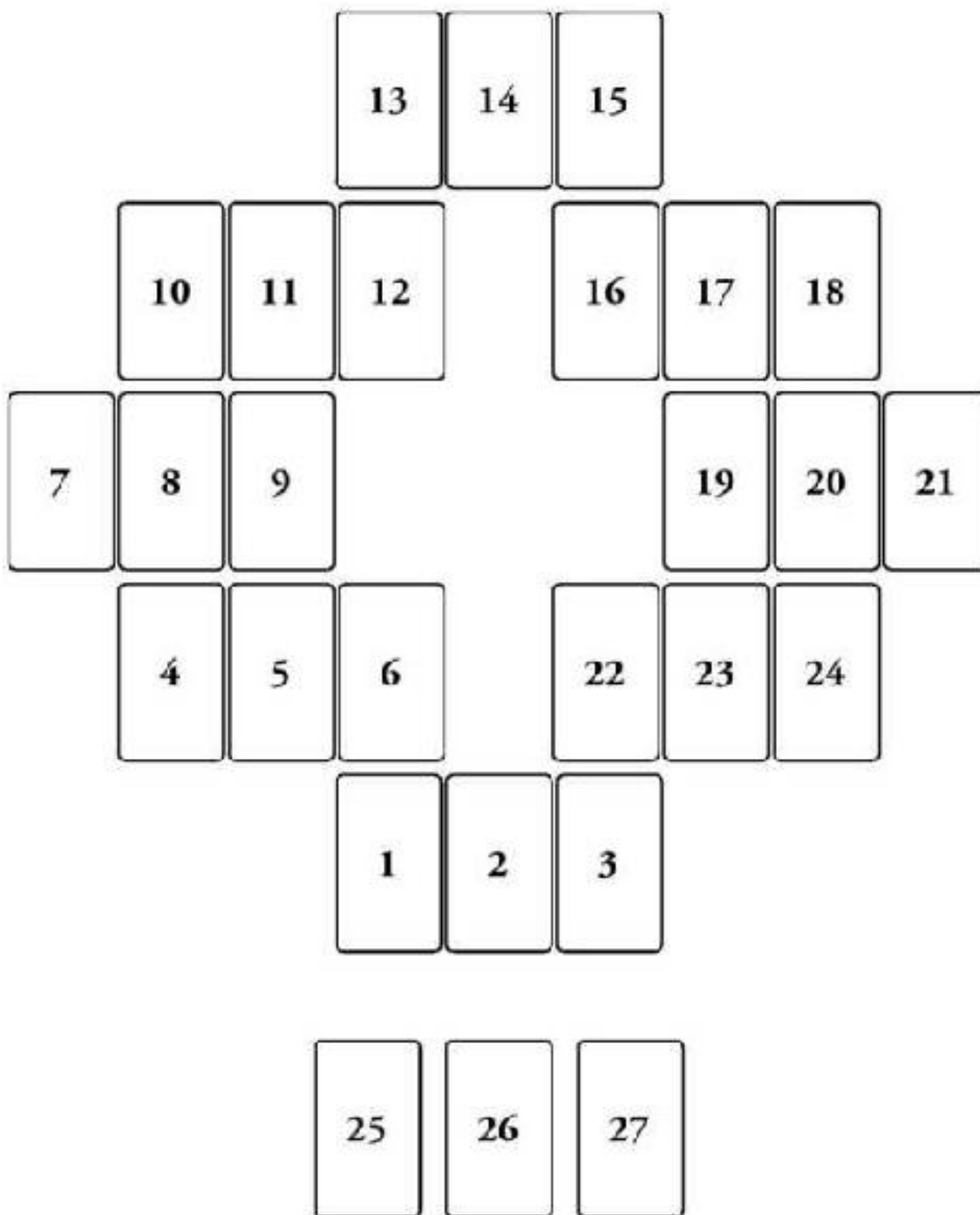
This spread is based on the Pagan Wheel of the Year. The use of the eight festivals here is a representation of concepts, just like we might use the different growth stages of a flower to represent aspects of our lives. Even though the spread is based around festivals that have associations with months of the year, this spread does not address when the events are going to happen. For this reading, I also found it useful to work out the querent's Year Card, so that it tells you the general theme of the year.

Cards 1-3, Winter Solstice: Yule is the time of the rebirth of the Sun from the darkness of Winter, so these cards indicate what will be born into the querent's life during this year, the new beginnings and projects, or the sudden birth of ideas, feelings, and aspects of the self.

Cards 4-6, Imbolc: This is the time of the first stirring of the earth from beneath the Winter snows, and the rekindling of the flame of life. These cards indicate what is in the very first stages of creation.

Cards 7-9, Spring Equinox: This is the equinox, so it is a time of balance. These cards indicate what will bring the querent's life into some sort of balance during the coming year, and keep the querent in balance and moving towards their goals.

Cards 10-12, Beltane: This is a time for sexuality and passion. These cards indicate the passions that will influence the querent's life this year, and how the querent's life will grow as a result. These cards also indicate what they will love most this year and give most attention to; what will fertilize their life and make them grow during the coming year.



Wheel of the Year Spread

Cards 13-15, Summer Solstice: The Summer Solstice is the time when the Sun is at its peak. These cards indicate the querent at their peak in the coming year, and the projects/events/ideas that will reach their peak for

the querent. It can also indicate the best part of the year, the achievements of the year, and the full fruition of plans in the querent's life.

Cards 16-18, Lughnassadh: Otherwise known as First Fruits, Lughnassadh is the beginning of the harvest. These cards indicate what will bear fruit this year in the querent's life, but will not quite be ready for a full harvest for a while. The rewards are starting to show themselves, but they are not ready to be grabbed just yet!

Cards 19-21, Autumn Equinox: Mahon is the middle of the harvest as well as another time of balance. It represents bounty and joy, what will be bounteous in the querent's life in the coming year, and what will bring joy and cause for celebration. These cards can also indicate the full harvest the querent will reap from their past ventures and hard work.

Cards 22-24, Samhain: Traditionally this is the end of the harvest when the Celts culled their herds. These cards indicate what will die in the querent's life this year, what will come to an end, and what they will cull from their life.

Cards 25-27, Blessings: A nice way to end the reading is to make three blessings from three cards. These cards can represent advice for the querent, or can indicate what is on the querent's side during the year, helping and keeping him or her going.

Optional Homework

- Perform a Wheel of the Year Tarot spread for yourself or a friend. During the reading, you may find that you begin to build up a clear picture in your mind as to the main theme running through the querent's year. Often you will also be able to see this theme developing as you go around the reading: you may see the theme reach its apex at the Summer Solstice, or see the fruits of it at the Autumn Equinox. Try to develop a coherent picture of the reading.

- Make a Tarot journal entry for one or all of the cards studied in this lesson. Perhaps you could try something a little creative: do a collage of some of the themes or symbols of one of the cards; make a sketch yourself of an image you think represents the card; write a poem or haiku!

Further Reading

The Tarot School's Birth Card notes are quite in-depth and a useful way of learning what the sets of cards mean (www.tarotschool.com/BirthCards.html).

Oedipus Rex, by Sophocles, for an illustration of the Wheel of Fortune and the sphinx symbolism.

Ezekiel 1:1-19 in the Bible, for Ezekiel's vision and the symbolism of the cherubim.



THE TAROT SPREAD

We interrupt our study of the Major Arcana to spend a lesson exploring the use of Tarot spreads in readings. You have already come across a couple of simple spreads so far, but it is easy to use Tarot spreads without knowing why. This lesson will discuss the advantages of different kinds of spreads,

the purpose of a spread, and some classic and modern spreads for later use. We'll also briefly look at the use of reversals in your readings.

This is the first lesson of two that look at Tarot spreads, and while here we will explore only pre-created spreads. Lesson 12 will focus on creating your own spreads both on the spot and for later use.

The Purpose of the Tarot Spread

The Tarot spread is a mainstay of most Tarot readers today. Even the most freshfaced beginner can perform a simple Past-Present-Future spread, and knows roughly what each card position refers to. On the surface, a Tarot spread merely looks like an attractive way of arranging the cards, but it has several other functions as well:

- A spread, with its various positions, guides the direction of the reading. It is easier to direct the reading from the past through the present and through to the future on a coherent line of effect if you have a spread that constructs this pattern for you.
- A spread gives you an extremely useful framework for interpretation of the cards before you: you may know what the Three of Swords means, but do you know what it means in relation to this question? A spread can link the card meaning you've recalled to the question at hand.
- It gives you a frame of reference for the entire reading, not just individual cards. A spread often demonstrates a line of effect from past to present, or links card positions to each other. This allows you to likewise link the cards that fall in those positions with each other, thereby creating a more coherent reading overall.
- The Tarot spread can allow you to highlight and focus on different aspects or facets of the question. This enables you to get to the bare bones of a reading and its question, and when you know the root of the reading and question you are better equipped to address it. It also allows you to pick up on further issues that may not have been explicit

in the question. When you can pick up on these, you have an astounding reading in the making.

- The wide variety of spreads available to you allows you to tailor the reading to the querent or question more specifically. This is even truer if you create your own spreads.
- While thinking about the spread to use or how to create a spread for that question, you begin to more fully comprehend and assess the question and its many facets.
- Deciding on a spread to use can form the basis of an effective communication between you and the querent.
- If you are creating a Tarot spread for a specific question, the creation process allows you to discuss the question with the client and thereby formulate the question into something suitable and proactive.

Having said this, a Tarot spread is not essential for an accurate reading. Individual readers will have preferences that affect their decision about whether or not to use a spread, as well as what kind of spread to use. Some readers find that drawing a few cards and simply laying them down in a line is enough to be able to see the whole reading's meaning, but if you are a beginner you may benefit from using a spread to structure your interpretation. It is also possible for you to lay some cards down in any old formation, and decide what the card positions relate to after seeing the cards. Sometimes you will notice that the shape you have created fits symbolically with the question at hand, or you'll notice that there are, for instance, three feminine cards lined up in a particular way. Don't be afraid to take these things as extra information from the universe or your subconscious.

Different Types of Spreads

There is a wide variety of Tarot spreads available for your use. They can be found in books, on the Internet, or passed from person to person. In recent years of the modern Tarot revival, spreads have proliferated as readers all

over the world try their hand at creating them. The spreads vary from serious examinations of life's problems to whimsical explorations of one's inner fairy, but no matter what the spread you can be sure it has a use! Loosely, we can separate this vast number of spreads into four different categories:

Small vs. Large

Spreads can vary from a single card to whole decks, and sometimes (though extremely rarely and not to be recommended) multiple decks. Generally speaking smaller spreads are ideal for beginners, yet they are not basic spreads: they are effective at giving in-depth answers. Larger spreads take longer to perform, and can suffer from the disadvantage of having too many cards, meaning the reader lacks focus on each card, creating a shallow reading that skirts the deeper issues.

Purpose-driven vs. General

Some spreads are created for a multi-use function: they are designed for use with many different kinds of questions, regardless of the question's focus. Examples of this are the Past-Present-Future spread and the Elemental spread. But some spreads are designed for specific purposes, such as a Past Life spread or a spread designed for answering questions about a romantic relationship.

Classic vs. Modern

There are certain spreads that have been around for centuries and are in such common circulation that they have become a mainstay of Tarot books and classes ever since. The Celtic Cross is a good example of a classic spread: timeless, recognized the world over even by non-Tarot readers, and found in the back of almost every Tarot book available! Because of the nature of classic spreads however, few people think to question their usefulness. On the other hand, there are many modern spreads that have been created in recent years and become extremely popular.

Personal vs. Impersonal

Some spreads focus on the querent as an individual, examining aspects of themselves, their personality, and their evolution. Some people view these as "spiritual" readings, but I feel this term is incorrect. Personal spreads do not have to focus on a person's spiritual self, but instead are often concerned with issues of a person's evolving emotional self, how they can improve, their relationship to their environment and other people, etc. Impersonal spreads, on the other hand, answer questions about more external factors (although the distinction between personal and impersonal in this case is not always clear-cut) such as a job, a business deal, other people, etc. One could also view this category in light of External vs. Internal.

Pre-Written vs. Created Spreads

Most spreads are pre-written, and are found in books and on the Internet. They are usually created by people other than ourselves, and can either be general or purpose-driven. There are thousands upon thousands of pre-written spreads available, and more are being created every day by Tarot enthusiasts around the globe. Sometimes they are created for that person's use and then published for others to use, and sometimes they are created for fun based on a theme, like a national holiday or a book. These pre-written spreads can be useful if you find some that you use a lot, but often they are very specific in their application. I often find that although I have access to a vast array of pre-written spreads, they are not always suitable for my purpose.

Therefore, you may find that creating spreads for your specific purpose or question to be the more useful approach. We will fully explore how to create spreads in Lesson 12 but for now we shall briefly look at the advantages and disadvantages of using pre-written and created spreads.

ADVANTAGES OF PRE-WRITTEN SPREADS:

- It takes very little time to find a pre-written spread, so if you are short on time and need something quickly, you have thousands of spreads at the other end of your Internet connection.

- Some pre-written spreads can be considered classics, and they are classic because they are extremely well-designed. The Elemental spread, Celtic Cross, and Tree of Life spreads are all examples of well-loved and well-used spreads that have a wide variety of applications.
- Some pre-written spreads have been inspired by themes you might never have considered and can be a lot of fun! Self-exploration spreads and spreads inspired by books, television shows, mythology, and national holidays can be a great way to get some Tarot practice in if you don't have a specific need or question.

DISADVANTAGES OF PRE-WRITTEN SPREADS:

- You may find that no matter how hard you look, you cannot find a spread that meets your needs exactly.
- The sheer number of pre-written spreads available makes it difficult to navigate the websites and books that contain them, making your search for a useful spread more trouble than creating one yourself
- If you are doing a professional reading, it can look unprofessional to find out the question and then spend ten minutes searching in books or on the Internet for a suitable spread.

ADVANTAGES OF CREATED SPREADS:

- Creating your own spread is a fun and imaginative process that can brighten up a dull afternoon.
- A spread created specifically for a reading or question can highlight specific aspects of the question and allows you to focus on parts of it as you see fit.
- The creation process with another person as querent serves to begin a discussion of what the querent wants to ask, fully exploring the question.

DISADVANTAGES OF CREATED SPREADS:

- A beginner may feel uncomfortable creating their own spreads at first, and the lack of confidence may adversely affect the creation process.
- Spreads created on the spot for a specific reading often lack beauty, since you rarely have time to spend on the spread's layout or formation, focusing instead on the card positions.

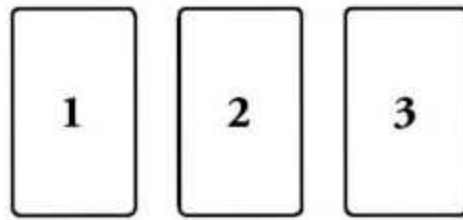
Some Classic Spreads

The following spreads are commonly encountered, and can be used for a wide variety of questions both general and specific. They are highly versatile, especially the smaller ones, so you can modify them slightly to fit your needs. We have already looked at the simple One-Card spread in Lesson 5, and that remains a recommended spread for nervous beginners as well as an excellent way of training yourself to see indepth answers in a concise and uncluttered manner. Likewise the four-card Elemental spread has already been discussed in Lesson 6.

The Three-Card Spread and Its Variants

This spread is probably the most versatile spread around-just enough cards to play with, but not so many that it is difficult to navigate.

These three cards can be almost anything! Traditionally they represent Past-Present-Future, as a continuum of cause and effect. This formula is useful if you want to find out how the querent got to the stage they are in presently, and what will happen as a result of their current actions. However, there are other positions that we can give to these three cards:



Three-Card Spread

- Mind, Body, Spirit
- Situation, Challenge, Outcome
- Options 1, 2, and 3
- Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
- Situation, Action, Outcome
- Physical, Emotional, Spiritual
- Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis
- Me, Him/Her, Us
- Maiden, Mother, Crone

EXERCISE 9.1

Do a three-card reading for yourself or another person using one of the above options. A simple and fun question to ask might be "Where am I at the moment?" using the Mind-Body-Spirit positioning, or "What can the Maiden, Mother, and Crone archetypes teach me?" using the Maiden-Mother-Crone positioning.

EXERCISE 9.2

Go back to Lesson 6, and perform the Elemental spread for yourself or somebody else. Consider each position as an area of your life-

mundane, spiritual, or emotional. Bear in mind the elemental attributes of the cards that fall in each position-is a Swords card in the Air position? Or is an Earth card dragging the element of Air down in your life or is it grounding it?

that fall in each position-is a Swords card in the Air position? Or is an Earth card dragging the element of Air down in your life or is it grounding it?

The Planetary Spread

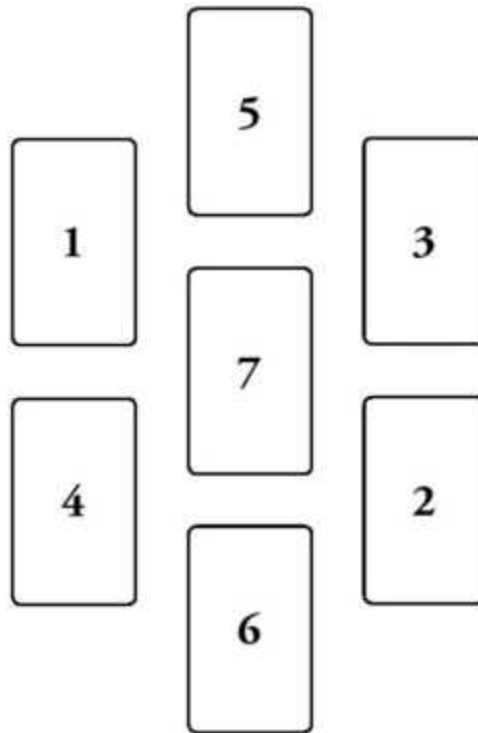
This seven-card spread is based on the concept of the classical planets of antiquity: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Moon and Sun. Like the Elemental spread, it is useful for assessing the different areas of your life generally, as well as for examining more specific issues from different perspectives.

Card 1. Saturn: Initiation and karmic return, death and time. The issue approached from the perspective of the inevitable.

Card 2. Jupiter: Religion and ethics, philosophy and growth. The issue approached from the perspective of leadership and authority.

Card 3. Mars: Force and self-authority, competition and ambition. The issue approached from the perspective of the ego as an individual self.

Card 4. Venus: Love and beauty, harmony and union. The issue approached from the perspective of inspiration.



Planetary Spread

Card 5. Mercury: The mind and intellect, wit and word. The issue approached from the perspective of reason.

Card 6. Moon: Receptivity and emotion, dreams and rhythms. The issue approached from the perspective of the intuition.

Card 7. Sun: Center and vitality, consciousness and purpose. The issue approached as a synthesis of the above cards.

EXERCISE 9.3

The above spread seems quite ordered, yet you will find it amazingly versatile and changeable to fit your own ideas of the classical planets and their associations. Do a little research in books or on the internet for some other associations for these planets. Begin to develop an understanding of their significance in relation to each other and this particular spread. This will also be useful later in Lesson 11.

EXERCISE 9.4

Perform a Planetary reading for yourself or somebody else. Try asking a question concerning something in your everyday life-your career, relationship, a group project, etc. It is often useful to view the cards in relation to each other-Mercury and Venus can represent different approaches of the mind to an issue (one from the intellectual perspective, another from the inspirational perspective).

The Spheres of Life Spread

This next spread is one I created many years ago for use in those readings where the querent doesn't really know what they want to ask! Often, they are curious about Tarot or just want the experience of a reading, and a lot of the time they just want a general overview of their lives in the present or the coming six to twelve months. This spread has the added beauty of being customizable to the querent, as they are the ones who choose the spread positions. There is no specified layout for the spread. Once the cards are chosen you can place them down in any formation you like!

Step 1. Shuffle the cards.

Step 2. Fan the cards out as wide as possible (this may take some practice since a Tarot pack is quite large!).

Step 3. Ask the querent to choose three cards from the fanned deck, saying what area of life they want to ask about, such as "career," "relationships," or "travel."

Step 4. Lay those cards down on the table, and take mental note or, if necessary, write down what area of life they relate to.

Step 5. Repeat the process, asking the querent to choose three cards for each area of their life they are interested in. Do this until the querent has no more areas to ask about! This may sound like the reading will go on forever, but you'll find that most people don't have that many

areas to concern themselves with and will run out of steam after four or five sets of cards.

Step 6. End the layout by asking the querent to choose three cards-these are the "Surprises" that the querent didn't think to ask about. (Everybody loves surprises!)

Read the cards as you would for a normal spread. You will find that sometimes the cards indicate separate events or influences in that area of life, whereas other times they need to be read together regarding a single event. Let your intuition guide you.

EXERCISE 9.5

Try performing the above spread for yourself or another person. Have fun with it, and don't worry about what areas of life you should or shouldn't ask about-this is your reading! I've had serious questions regarding "my career" and "family life," as well as not-so-serious ones regarding "my car" and "the next party." This spread can also make a useful monthly reading on top of a Daily Draw, since it allows you to assess at a wide glance the various aspects of your life. Try doing this in relation to the past month, and compare it to your Daily Draws for that month.

Other Classic Spreads

There are several other classic and much-loved Tarot spreads, including the Celtic Cross, Tree of Life, Zodiacal, and Wheel of the Year spreads. Some of these shall be explored in later lessons, as they use at least ten cards each and can become unwieldy and intimidating. Best to get as much practice in as possible with smaller spreads before tackling these monsters!

The Earliest Recorded Spread

Mary K. Greer has pinpointed the earliest recorded Tarot spread in an essay found in volume 8, book 1, of the work *Monde Primitif, analyse et compare avec le monde moderne* (1781), mainly written but in places edited by

Antoine Court de Gebelin. This essay, by "M. Le C. de M****" (Le Comte de Mellet), is the second essay in the book. It is performed with two people, one given the twenty-two Major Arcana cards and the other given the fifty-six Minor Arcana cards. Both people shuffle their cards, and the Minor Arcana person (person one) lays down his cards face-up, counting from Ace to 10 and then Page to King. If, when he counts a number (for example "7"), the card he turns up is the same number, it is laid aside.

While this is happening, the Major Arcana person (person two) lays down one of their cards face-down every time person one counts a card. The card that person two lays down when person one gets a match is paired with that matched Minor Arcana and laid aside.

Greer has this process continuing until person one runs out of Minor Arcana cards to count, but the essay itself seems to suggest that person one should run through all their Minor Arcana cards three times over, reshuffling the discarded pile each time. Whatever method you use, the result is a set of pairs of Minor-Major cards, which should be read together. These pairs could be interpreted with the Major Arcana as the main event, and the Minor Arcana as the after-effect; more likely you will see how the pairs are formed and find a pattern yourself with each new reading.

EXERCISE 9.6

Try performing this spread. If you don't have a second person, this can be done by yourself-but do so slowly so as not to lose count! In particular, focus on how the Minor and Major in each pair relate to each other-are they different emanations of the same event or energy? Are they completely different facets of an issue? Ask yourself why this particular Minor and Major are together, and try to view them as a whole rather than individual cards.

Using Reversals

A "reversal" is when a card appears upside-down in a reading. Some readers deliberately reverse some of their pack while shuffling to enable reversals, while others keep their pack strictly "this way up" because they

don't use reversals. Those who use reversals find that a card's upside-down nature changes its normal meaning significantly. However, there are as many ways to read reversals as there are readers who use them, and some don't use them at all. Some readers (particularly those who use an intuitive approach rather than a keyword or mnemonic system) find that they can glean what may traditionally be called reversed meanings from their cards based on other factors: surrounding cards, question, querent response, intuitive flashes, etc. Certainly we seldom read a card the same way twice, leaving plenty of room for a reader to sometimes see a normally positive card like the Sun as a negative factor.

Whether or not to use reversals in your readings is a personal preference that you will decide upon with time and experience. As your reading style and method of gaining meaning and interpretation from the cards develop and you begin to understand how you best do a reading, you will eventually settle into a comfort zone regarding reversals. If you don't want to use them, that's fine-I often don't. However, it is wise to be aware of how you would read them if you did use them. You never know when one rogue card will appear reversed, no matter how careful you are!

EXERCISE 9.7

Take one of the Major Arcana cards we have studied so far from your deck. Examine it closely. Take a look at its keywords and meaning earlier in this book, and consider these questions.

- What would the opposite of these keywords or meanings be? Write this down.
- How might blocking the energies of some of these keywords or meanings manifest in somebody's life? For example, how would the energies of creativity (Empress) being blocked affect somebody? Write this down.
- Ask yourself if you think this card is positive, negative, or neutral.

There are several ways of approaching reversals, and as usual they depend on both your personal preference and your intuitive response to the cards in the context of the reading. New ways will always become apparent to you as you gain experience, but the following are a few methods of interpreting reversals:

- Opposite meaning to the upright meanings: For instance, a card indicating success when upright might be seen as failure reversed. This approach is problematic however, since cards such as the Ten of Swords (ruin) would appear to indicate the best experience ever when reversed! This seems counter-intuitive for some of the extremely positive or extremely negative cards of the deck. However, sometimes an opposite meaning can be read from a reversed card.
- Blocked energy: The card still means the same as it normally would, but its reversal suggests those energies and influences are blocked in the querent's life: stifled, unexpressed, unable to flow freely. As suggested in the above exercise, this can manifest in various ways in somebody's life-ways that may become apparent elsewhere in the reading.
- Delayed meaning.- Perhaps the card means everything it would when upright, but its meaning is delayed in somebody's life. They may have success, but it won't be for a while yet.
- Worsened meaning.- Similar to the opposite meaning approach, but every card simply gets worse! So the positive cards are less positive (though not necessarily completely opposite-an extremely positive card would still be quite positive) and the negative cards just get worse.
- A different perspective: Perhaps the cards being reversed are just urging you as a reader to approach their meanings from a different perspective, maybe shake your old reading habits up. So, do you always see the Four of Coins as greed? When reversed it may be asking you to see it in a new light.

The best way to come to grips with reversals is to use them. I advise you to spend quite a few readings using them until you have decided whether you wish to continue with them. Some points to consider when you make your decision:

- How do you read? If you prefer to read using an intuitive approach to the card images, you may find it difficult to read an upside-down card because the images won't be clear. However, if you recall card meanings intellectually or through a mind map or similar process, you may find an upside-down image does not bother you. An intuitive reader will also find that because their card interpretations vary so greatly between readings, one card image upright can mean a number of different things, making the use of reversals to indicate just a certain number of those redundant.
- Does your deck accommodate reversals? There are some decks that seem to work better with reversals than others, from the perspective of images. There is even a deck available that halves the card image so that one depicts the upright meaning and the other depicts a reversed meaning (see the Revelations Tarot by Zach Wong).
- Do you read for others? And if so, where are they seated during your readings? A querent sitting opposite you may find it difficult to understand reversals, since to them an upright card is reversed and vice versa!

Optional Homework

Try to do the spreads in this chapter for as many people as possible; if you have nobody to read for, try to do them for fictional characters from films and literature. Record them in your Tarot journal.

Further Reading

Study on the Tarots, and on the Divination by the Cards of the Tarots, by M. Le C. de M***, for the earliest Tarot spread as well as several other interesting 18th century views of the Tarot. Online translation into

English by Donald Tyson at <http://www.donaldtyson.com/gebelin.html>
(includes first Court de Gebelin's essay on the Tarot).

Learning Tarot Reversals, by Joan Bunning.

The Complete Book of Tarot Reversals, by Mary K. Greer.

Revelations Tarot, by Zach Wong, for a deck that accounts for reversals in its images.

Classic Tarot Spreads, by Sandor Konradd, is a book of well-known and useful Tarot spreads.

Illustrated Tarot Spreads, by Heidemarie Pielmeier and Marcus Schirner.
More Tarot spreads, but includes plenty of modern ones.

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THE MAJOR ARCANA: THE DARK SIDE

Not all our Tarot readings are pleasant, and not all the futures we see are welcome. We may stumble across negative emotions and outlooks, and at times things can look so bleak that we want to give up and wait for the bad to happen. Similarly there are some cards in the Major Arcana that are approached with fear and viewed as entirely negative. In this lesson, we will examine the three darkest cards in the pack-XII The Hanged Man, XV The Devil, and XVI The Tower-and their context, as well as ways of approaching negative outcomes in readings and methods of turning an initially bad reading into something proactive.

The Dark Side: Learning How to Cope

Every Tarot reader must remember that bad or painful events can sometimes be necessary or can be pathways to eventual good. Childbirth is

one of the most painful experiences a woman can endure, but is necessary to bring a child into the world. Exams can be terrifying, but they are necessary to gain qualifications for use in a career. Stage fright hits most public speakers, actors, or performers, but gives them the adrenaline rush necessary to perform, and reminds them to prepare themselves. Thus, the painful experiences we sometimes see in the cards are not clear-cut.

However, we also have a duty to our querents (and to ourselves) to be aware that some painful experiences are just that and nothing more. Bad stuff happens to good people. Sometimes it can be avoided if we know it is coming, but sometimes the only approach is to minimize the damage by seeking advice on how to cope with it when it happens.

EXERCISE 10.1

Imagine that a friend has confided in you regarding a difficult and painful illness they have contracted. They are looking to you for comfort and advice. How would you respond? What advice would you give them? Would you:

- Tell them it's going to be okay?
- Use physical contact to comfort them, like a hug?
- Offer further help if needed?
- Listen attentively and let them talk?
- Give them information that could help, if you know it?

Any of the above is an excellent response to your friend, and they are equally useful in response to querents who have come to you for a Tarot reading which has turned up some negative cards. They need a little change to make them suitable for your querent, however, so:

- Tell them that there are ways of approaching the situation that minimize the pain.

- Use body language to reassure them, such as eye contact, a smile, or open hand gestures.
- Offer to draw a further few cards to clarify the situation or give advice.
- Listen attentively and let them talk-this does not change. As we saw in Lesson 5 some querents just want to be listened to, and talking themselves through the problem can be just as useful as the reading itself. True listening also means you do not judge the querent or interrupt them.
- Refer them to groups or organizations that can help if the problem is something specific. This might include medical professionals, counselors, or charities.

* EXERCISE 10.2

If you plan to become a professional reader or read for others in another capacity, it would be wise to begin collecting contact details for services and groups that you may refer your querents to for specific guidance or help. To start with, you should consider buying an address book and including in it the contacts of:

- Local doctor services or health care services. This includes midwives, sexual health clinics, family planning clinics, and home carers.
- Counseling services, such as therapists, career advice, suicide helplines, Alcoholics Anonymous, drug addiction help centers, and marriage counsellors.
- Depending on the country you live in and the type of querent you read for most often, you may also need local services. I keep a list of student finance services as I live in a university city; local businesses, health food shops, and other similar services such as Reiki healers, spiritual workshops, and bookshops are also handy.

Essentially, when you see something bad in the cards, you can use a fourfold approach:

1. Minimize the suffering of receiving the negative news: You can do this through simple things such as your body language and method of delivery, tone of voice and your own reaction to the cards.
2. Reassurance: The querent must remain in a receptive, calm state so you can begin to help them. Reassurance is key to this. Although you cannot state that the bad things won't happen at all, you can remind the querent that it isn't always as bad as it seems, and things can be done to make it easier.
3. Deeper examination: This includes examination of the causes of the bad news, as well as influences upon the querent and the results of the bad events. Gathering this information is the first step to making sense of everything.
4. Advice and preparation: Drawing further cards, or reading deeper into the existing cards, can give the querent advice that relates to the information gathered in Step 3. The advice can help the querent change their perspective or attitude to something more positive, prepare for the bad if it is unavoidable, or begin to attempt avoiding the bad.

Negative into Positive: Becoming a Proactive Tarot Reader

The traditional image of a Tarot reader is that of a gypsy sitting in a darkened, incense-filled room, dealing out doom and gloom in her card readings. This image has been adopted by writers, advertisers, and artists for decades, including J. K. Rowling in the character of the Hogwarts Divination teacher, Sibyl Trelawney. However, we do not want to become that kind of Tarot reader. We do not want to predict a bleak fortune and sit back while we watch the querent cry. We want to become proactive Tarot readers and give them the power to change the outcome.

Using the advice above is an excellent start: by referring a querent to a group or organization for further help or advice gives them the opportunity

outside the reading to make a difference and take action into their own hands. By doing this we silently remind the querent that the future in the cards is their future, not ours, and they have an active role to play in it. Another good way to get the querent involved and take a role in their future is to give them something to do at the very beginning of the session. Depending on your reading style, it could be one of the following:

- Shuffle the cards.
- Cut the cards.
- Choose cards for the reading from a fanned deck.
- Discuss their question thoroughly with you.
- Choose the deck they want you to read with.
- Use a pen and paper to write down the reading.
- Answer questions about what they see in the card images, or how they feel in response to them.
- Express how they feel or what they think.

When the querent takes an active role in the reading process, they are invested in it mentally and emotionally, making the communication process easier and more open.

The Dark Night of the Soul

As discussed above, the nature of life and human experience is such that painful experiences can sometimes lead to a positive conclusion. In a person's life they may experience a pain so acute that they feel as though they can go on no longer-this really is the end of the road. This can occur following a variety of events: breakdown of a relationship, death of a loved one, addiction, failure, sudden unemployment, spiritual suffering, and more. The feelings associated with this state of mind can be found most clearly in

the cards we are studying in this lesson: the Hanged Man, the Devil, and the Tower. The Hanged Man, in particular, tells us that some pain-particularly spiritual pain-can be the Dark Night of the Soul, from which the soul is born anew and liberated, or from which the soul can evolve to a higher state.

"The Dark Night of the Soul" is a term that emerged from the writings of the 16th century Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross. It describes an almost universal theme of spiritual desolation and loneliness experienced by mystics and religious seekers throughout time-it is a feeling of separation from the Divine. However, this Dark Night is also used repeatedly by mystics (such as Mother Teresa and St. Therese of Lisieux) to describe a suffering that brings them closer to God-they are divided from God so that they may experience the ecstasy of union with Him. The Dark Night is also said to lead to higher spiritual and mystical understanding or a religious experience.

The Hanged Man card bears an image of a man hanging upside down from a tree, staff, cross, or poles. It brings to mind an account of a Dark Night recorded in ancient Scandinavian mythology-that of Odin's quest for the Runes. In the Hava- mal ("Sayings of the High One") we read:

137.

I trow I hung on that windy Tree
nine whole days and nights,
stabbed with a spear, offered to Odin,
myself to mine own self given,
high on that Tree of which none hath heard
from what roots it rises to heaven.

138.

None refreshed me ever with food or drink,
I peered right down in the deep;
crying aloud I lifted the Runes
then back I fell from thence.

Odin's wounding and hanging from the World Tree recalls the crucifixion of Christ that created a bridge between God and mankind in the Christian tradition. Throughout the world we find stories of terrible sufferings that lead to a mystical insight or Divine love. The Hanged Man card reminds us that sometimes suffering and sacrifice are necessary to enable further evolution. Furthermore, it reminds us of the Descent into the Underworld theme found throughout world mythology that speaks of the soul descending into darkness in the service of the light.

EXERCISE 10.3

Do a little research on the themes of "Dark Night of the Soul" and "Descent into the Underworld" in religious writings or mythology. Some ideas for starting points might be:

- Persephone's descent into Hades and Demeter's search for her
- The above quest of Odin for the Runes
- Christ's moment of doubt in the Garden of Gethsemane
- Kwan Yin's sacrifice and descent into Hell, and the subsequent redemption of the souls within

EXERCISE 10.4

Read St. John of the Cross' "Dark Night of the Soul" or some of the writings of St. Therese of Lisieux. They may give you a deeper

understanding of the experience itself and the feelings of the mystic during it. Both should be available for viewing online in translation.

XII The Hanged Man

In some cases, suffering leads to understanding. We sacrifice ourselves to a higher cause. Our mind, heart, soul, and body undergo torment and disillusion, doubt and distress so that we might evolve, help others, discover new horizons, and come out the other side into the light once more. In this way, the Hanged Man is a reflection of the Dying/Resurrecting Godman found throughout mythology: the divine figure who dies or descends into the Underworld so that others may receive life, salvation, or the promise of divine love. Jesus, Osiris, Buddha, Odin, Kwan Yin ... in every account of this recurring theme we see a common element of surrender: it is essential that at some point in the process of this Dark Night of the Soul the figure surrenders to the experience and undergoes a transformative experience that puts them in the hands of God. Thus, accompanying this card are feelings of powerlessness, but those who are accustomed to control can learn a potent lesson.

Disillusionment with yourself must precede Enlightenment.

-VERNON HOWARD

If you only knew what darkness I am plunged into.

-ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX

Hanging upside-down, the Hanged Man is not being hanged by the neck until dead (although there is a strong possibility that traitors were punished this way in medieval Italy). His world has been turned topsy-turvy, and he invites us to change our perceptions and look at everything differently. Who is upside-down-we, the viewers, or the Hanged Man himself?

Notably, the French title given to this card ("le Pendu") is a word that links to our "pendulum"-a hanging, swinging device-but also to "ponder"-deep thought. In occult decks, the card is given the Hebrew letter Mem

("water"), and thus the image of the Hanged Man himself gazes down into the watery abyss. This is a card of reflection upon the self in the time of the soul's greatest stress.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Upside-down: Changing perception, feelings of being lost; here the Hanged Man is descending into the Underworld, turning his back to God.

Bent leg: In many images the Hanged Man's right leg is bent at the knee and the lower leg is horizontal, accompanied with the Hanged Man's arms being spread wide and pointing downwards. This posture forms the symbol of a cross upon a triangle-the descent of light into darkness in order to redeem it.

Halo: An image of holy realization, sainthood, or spiritual purity.

Water: Reflection, the Abyss. Crowley calls it "a baptism which is also a death."

Money falling: A recollection of the Italian punishment given to traitors; coins recall Judas Iscariot.

Spear: The weapon with which Christ's side was pierced, as well as that with which Odin sacrificed himself.

Odin: The Norse God who hung from the World Tree in sacrifice to himself so that he might gain knowledge of the Runes.

Runes: See above regarding Odin.

Tree: The World Tree from which the Hanged Man or mystic hangs during the descent. Also the axis mundi-the universal link between heaven and earth.

Cross: The crucifixion.

KEYWORDS: Mysticism, mystical experience, new perspective, sacrifice, standstill, cutting away, philosophy, religion, spirituality, reflection, meditation, Dark Night of the Soul, descent, surrender, death of the ego, move to more spiritual concerns, initiation

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: The film *Stigmata* shows the character of young, modern woman Frankie afflicted with the spiritual illness of stigmata given only to the most pious and holy Christian mystics. The film, although fictional, gives an excellent account of the experience of stigmata, and the feeling of union with Christ at the time of his crucifixion. The wounds of stigmata appear spontaneously on the body of the mystic (and in this case, Frankie), and they sometimes lead to the death of the mystic. They are, however, described as both a blessing and a curse, since they are born from the deepest love and union with Christ possible.

As A PERSON: The person indicated by this card is a mystic, and often experiences extremely intense spiritual feelings-particularly feelings of isolation, doubt, desolation, and separation from God, followed by blissful union with the Divine. They may sometimes have a "martyr complex," intent on suffering for the needs of others when there is no need. They can be deep thinkers, spending a lot of their time in reflection, meditation, or self-examination. They always think differently from others-not because they are contrary but because their perspective on the world is so different, informed as it is by their spiritual experiences.

EXERCISE 10.5

- Take your Hanged Man out of your deck and examine it. Does your card show a particular myth or deity associated with sacrifice or the Descent into the Underworld? What symbols do you see that strike you? What might they mean?
- In your Tarot journal, note down what you think a "Dark Night of the Soul" would feel like, what might cause it, and what might occur after it. How would it change your perception of the world? Have you ever had an experience like this?

- Watch the film Stigmata.
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- Why is the Hanged Man upside down, instead of hanged by the neck?
- What is the nature of sacrifice?
- How do acceptance and reflection interact with your spiritual or mystical life?
- What do you surrender to? What experiences have you had of surrender and giving up? How did it feel?
- What is your perspective on the world? How do you approach it?
- What background do you have that defines your view of the world?
- Can you think of another perspective that could be used?
- Which perspective is correct?
- Have you experienced any kind of initiation? What was it like?

XVI The Tower

Whereas the Hanged Man's suffering leads to enlightenment and initiation, the suffering of the Tower is destructive and brings somebody to the lowest point they can be. Whereas the destruction in the Death card is natural and often slow and foreseeable, that of the Tower is unpredictable, sudden, and gut-wrenching. It is here in the Tarot that we find completed deconstruction, and the forced removal of everything no longer necessary in one's life. The image of the tower represents the sense of self, ego, and the lifestyle we build for ourselves as we go through life. It is our ambitions, our morals, our relationships, and our stability. And it is completely destroyed by a bolt

of lightning from above. No words can describe here the experience of such complete and seemingly pointless destruction.

A crisis event often explodes the illusions that anchor our lives.

-ROBERT VENINGA

Listen, O Lord of the meeting rivers, Things standing shall fall, But the moving shall ever stay.

-RAMANUJAN

However, this is an opportunity to start from scratch, afresh, anew. What has been destroyed was unnecessary, or poorly founded, so when you are taken back down to your lowest foundations you can make them stronger and build up something better. The Tower card reminds us that if we build structures on unstable and unsafe foundations they will crumble under the strain of the elements. But much like the Wheel of Fortune and Death, The Tower card tells us that change is the only constant in the universe. That which we so earnestly hold on to and long to remain stable will inevitably become subject to the tides of change and the destruction of the universe at its most basic.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Ruined tower: As described above, the tower represents a structure in our lives that we have placed a lot of value on: the self, ego, lifestyle, religion, marriage, ambition. Ruined, it symbolizes our self-creation being destroyed by external forces.

Falling crown: Another symbol of the fall and destruction of the ego and self, as well as values and highest ambitions.

Lightning: The "bolt from the blue" that is used to describe both a curse from the Gods and a blessing of sudden enlightenment. In many cases, there is a fine line between the two.

Fire: The fires of creation and destruction.

Eye of Shiva: In Hinduism, the Eye of Shiva (called Jnana) opens its fiery gaze and burns this world to ashes, destroying the illusion of creation and revealing the truth of existence. It signifies the end of an age and an external force using destruction to push realization upon somebody.

Falling people: The figures falling to their deaths from the burning tower are a potent image of destruction and suffering on a human level.

Explosion: Not only destruction, but also release. As with the Eye of Shiva, when the false is burned away, we are left with a blank slate.

Dove and serpent: in the Thoth deck, these represent two different kinds of desire the Will to Live and the Will to Die. Together they indicate that life and death, destruction and creation are phases of a single process.

Crumbling: The destructive process itself.

Waves: Waves lapping at the crumbling tower are a reminder that even the gentlest of forces (such as water) will erode the weakest structures.

KEYWORDS: Destruction, collapse, crumbling, toppling, fall, painful experience, reevaluation, false foundations removed, breaking of bad habits, loss, difficulty, sudden upheaval, change, inspiration, realization, breaking down of the ego

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: The parable of the Two Foundations (better known as "The Man Who Built His House Upon Sand") in Luke 6:47-49 is an excellent example of how the external forces placed upon something that has poor foundations can quickly destroy it. The Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) shows how people have a tendency to build for themselves false structures in their lives as a means of perpetuating their egos-and the terrible, inevitable consequences when these structures come crashing down.

As A PERSON: It is very rare that this card indicates a person, but if it does, it points to a very destructive and negative individual. They have a tendency to attack others' beliefs and values, or to try to put others down and criticize them. They are fiercely independent, but may try too hard to force people to become more independent themselves. This person certainly is insensitive and can be very blunt with their words, yet honest and truthful. Sometimes, however, the truth hurts, and while a Tower person is excellent at deconstructing their own and others' weaknesses, personalities, and philosophies, they may take it too far and hurt people's feelings.

* EXERCISE io.6

- Take the Tower card from your deck and examine it. How does the image make you feel? What does it suggest to you? What symbols strike you and what symbols are different to those listed above?
- How do you think you could read this card in a positive manner? How would its themes aid a person? How could somebody use the ideas of this card in a proactive manner in their life?
- Find and read the myths of Shiva and Kali (Hindu). What qualities are they associated with? What do their stories say about the Tower?
- Read the story of Icarus, in Ovid's Metamorphoses Book VIII:183-235 ("Daedalus and Icarus"). What role did the ego play in this story? How does Daedalus feel at the end? How would you have advised Daedalus if you had seen the outcome of the story in a Tarot reading you were doing for him?
- You can use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What is inside the Tower?
- What has led to this destruction?

- What do you think will happen to the people who have fallen from the Tower?
- What form may foundations take? What are the foundations of your life?
- What kind of events do you think would cause the destruction of the Tower?
- What experiences have you had of sudden, painful change? What were they like? How did you respond to them?
- What parts of you are created by your ego? How could they be destroyed by external forces?

XV The Devil

The title of this card is both misleading and entirely appropriate. It is misleading in that the card does not represent an incarnation of evil that has an external reality and consciousness: it is not suggesting the existence of a truly evil being that tempts humans to sin. However, the term "Devil" recalls a number of things that can be applied to this card: the little devil on our shoulder that gives us permission or excuses to commit bad or harmful acts; to be a "devil in [insert pastime here]" indicates you are passionate and unstoppable. Demons are often seen as the opposite of angels, and this dichotomy can be seen in the Tarot as Temperance and The Devil-the angel of virtue and moderation next to the demon of temptation and excess.

I can resist everything but temptation.

-OSCAR WILDE

We have nothing to fear but fear itself.

-FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Because the name itself often strikes fear into the heart, and because of the extremely dark appearance of the card, it has become associated with fear and the darkest depths of the human psyche: the part that is prone to addiction, that which activates when we are frightened and revert to an animal nature. It also represents the bestial force within: not in the same way of Strength where we learn to ride the beast and harness its power-but when that force takes over and we are controlled by it, slaves to our lower passions, fears, and excesses.

However, in many modern occult decks this card has become one of the primal force of creation and power: the raw animal nature within us all calls us to find a mate and reproduce, and reminds us to eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy life. The Devil can indicate the passionate lust for life that can be useful unless taken to excess, when it becomes dangerous-leading to the "demon drink," drug addiction, nymphomania, and irrational fears that control us.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Devil: The beast within, a force of temptation and darkness.

Fallen angel: As mentioned above, the Devil can be viewed as the opposite of the angel in Temperance, thus excess instead of moderation, vice instead of virtue.

Chains: These symbolize the ties that bind us in our everyday lives: everything we have chained ourselves to whether it is through necessity or choice. They also represent addictions and burdens, slavery and oppression.

Horns and tail: In many cards human figures are given horns and a tail, transforming them into animals.

Pan: The wild lust and thrust of life and passion. (See Exercise 10 for more information.)

Reversed pentagram: Whereas an upright pentagram often symbolizes the rising of man toward God, or spirit ascending out of matter, the reversed pentagram symbolizes the descent of spirit into matter or it being trapped in the mundane.

Fire: When we speak of torment, we do so in terms of fire; we are "on fire" with lust, for instance, and in the Christian tradition the fires of hell torment sinners.

Underworld/Hell.: These can be seen as metaphors for the darkness of our own inner worlds, our psyches at their most fearful or dark. We may descend into our personal Hells during the darkest times of our lives, and confront our own inner demons there.

Objects of desire: Indicate that this is a material card, with a strong emphasis on the physical temptations of life. Riches, sex, alcohol, parties; everything that can be taken to excess and become a selfish addiction.

Phallus: The creative force of life, as well as raw lust.

Goat/ram: Symbols of the zodiacal sign of Capricorn.

KEYWORDS: Lust, greed, anger, fear, hatred, aggression, lost, bound, imprisoned, trapped, alcoholism, addiction, self-harm, substance abuse, descent, Underworld, darkness, inner demons, crisis, vicious cycle, bad habits **IN LITERATURE AND FILM:** Most books or films have a representative of this card, such as Sauron, the force of evil and leader of the bestial races in *The Lord of the Rings*, intent on bringing a reign of darkness. He also manifests his power through the One Ring, which when worn grants the bearer a number of powers that quickly become addictive (like invisibility and the power to see truly). It also becomes almost too heavy to bear when worn for an extended period of time, yet the bearer becomes so possessive of it as it warps their mind that they will readily attack and kill anyone to keep it.

As A PERSON: This is somebody who is the life and soul of the party, who knows how to enjoy life, and who does so to great excess. This person is

usually a drinker or smoker, and may experiment with a number of drugs. They are also extremely passionate and lustful, and would usually describe their favorite hobby as sex! However, this person takes drugs or alcohol as way to hide, repress, or forget about parts of themselves they don't like or because they are addicted. They may also be selfabusers and have a pessimistic or hedonistic view of life.

EXERCISE 10.7

- Take the Devil card out of your deck. It is likely, especially if you have a modern deck, that the artist has changed this card considerably to better fit the deck's theme. Is the Devil now Pan? The Horned God? Chains? The Underworld? What does this suggest to you about the card's meaning, and how do you feel about it?
- Brainstorm the words "devil" and "demon." What have you got? How do these apply to the card?
- You can use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.
- Read Aleister Crowley's "Hymn to Pan." What does it suggest about the more positive aspects of the Devil?

Questions for Journaling

- What colors dominate the card, and what does this mean?
- How do you feel when you look at this card?
- Which character in the card do you most identify with?
- What form can chains take?
- What form can addictions take?
- What addictions have you experienced in your life? How did you overcome them? How would you overcome them if you haven't yet done so?

- What parts of yourself have you repressed or kept hidden? Why? How would you feel to bring it out into the open?
- Does this card remind you of any other cards in the Tarot deck? How does this relate to the card's meaning?
- Are there any symbols in this card that are also in other cards? What do you think this means?
- What form do your darkest personality traits take?

The Underworld Spread

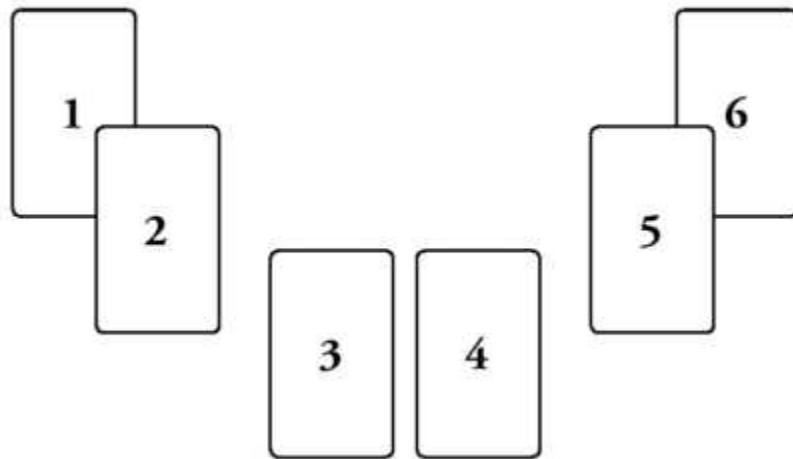
This may not be the most pleasant spread you can do, but it can be the beginning of transformation and self-realization. By highlighting your own shadow-self and inner darkness, you can begin to understand yourself more coherently. Only by understanding our inner demons can we begin to be free of their control.

This reading is designed so that you can imagine yourself descending into the Underworld of the Eleusinian Mysteries, where initiates were taught to drink from the river Mnemosyne (memory) instead of Lethe (forgetfulness) after death and thereby achieve liberation from Hades.

Card 1. The Cave Mouth: What is the path to my darkness? What opens the way for the monstrous side of myself?

Card 2. The Inner Sanctum: In which area of my life does this darkness manifest most readily?

Card 3. Hades Himself' Face to face with my inner demon, what form does it take?



Underworld Spread

Card 4. DrinkingMemory: How can I begin to understand, accept, or heal this darkness?

Card 5. Ascent: How can I begin to redeem this dark aspect of my psyche and bring it into the light?

Card 6. Sunlight: The outcome of this work.

Optional Homework

- With each of these cards, spend some time writing in your Tarot journal about their positive qualities. It may be helpful for you to begin with a comparison chart, noting the usual associations of each card (which are largely negative) and then next to them writing how these associations can be perceived in a positive manner.
- Re-read the story of Oedipus (see Lesson 8). How did the Oracle act that may have caused more harm to the characters? How could the prophecy have been delivered in a more proactive way (remind yourself of this in Lesson 10)?
- Make Tarot journal entries for one or all of the cards following the above exercises.

- Perform the Underworld spread for yourself (not for another person at this stage-it can raise important issues.)

Further Reading

"Hymn to Pan", by Aleister Crowley, for the Devil. Can be found online at [http:// www.poemhunter.com/poems/](http://www.poemhunter.com/poems/).

Tarot Shadow Work:• Using the Dark Symbols to Heal, by Christine Jerre.

Metamorphoses Book VIII: 183-235, by Ovid, for the story of Icarus-an example of the Tower.

II

THE MAJOR ARCANA: WHAT'S OUT THERE? (IN HERE?)

Our final lesson on the Major Arcana explores the cosmological aspects of the Tarot. We will examine the lofty, heavenward aspirations of the concepts embedded in the cards, as well as our relation to the wide universe around us. What's out there? Where are we? Where are we going? Unlike previous lessons, we will examine four cards from the Major Arcana rather than three.

As Above, So Below

The maxim of "As above, so below" has been in use for centuries, and describes a perspective on the universe and the relation between the realm of mankind and the realm of the divine. It was originally written in the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus circa second century CE, a short treatise on the magical nature of the universe and the secrets of alchemical transmutations, which was greatly esteemed by alchemists and philosophers throughout the ages. Within this short phrase, an entire cosmology is contained: it says that the divine realm (which at the time included Gods, planetary forces, constellations, and other spirits) is reflected in the mundane world (in mankind, the earth, and nature's cycles). The two realms are also called Macrocosm (large cosmos) and Microcosm (little cosmos).

In Tarot, magic, and alchemy, it is believed that what we do in the Microcosm can have a direct influence upon the Macrocosm-this is the principle upon which people perform magical rituals. It is also believed that the Macrocosm can be represented in a Microcosmic form-in models such as the Kabbalistic Tree of Life and the Tarot. It is this fact-that the Microcosm reflects the Macrocosm-that makes the Tarot a complete rendition of the universe (both its divine and mundane nature) in miniature and which some people believe enables the Tarot to work.

As we will see later, many methods of ordering and understanding the universe around us have been placed onto the Tarot. The zodiac, moon phases, planets, elements, and Hebrew letters of the Kabbalah have been added-which we will explore in detail later. This allows us to not only read the Tarot for mundane questions, but also to consult it in relation to spiritual and magical paths. Thus, you will see that the cards of the Tarot remind you of cosmic principles such as that of cause and effect (Justice), change (The Wheel of Fortune), the Other Self (The Lovers), and illumination (The Sun).

* EXERCISE 11.1

Read the Emerald Tablet of Hermes. You should be able to find several excellent translations online, in particular on Wikipedia. Despite the centuries between different versions of this short treatise, they are remarkably similar. As you read it, consider how it relates to the

concept of "As above, so below," and what this means for magical and spiritual endeavors.

Astrology and the Tarot

Astrology is extremely popular, and has been used since ancient Mesopotamia to foretell the future, chart the procession of time, and gain insight into a person's nature. It is unsurprising that it has been linked with the Tarot for centuries (since the occult revival). Although being aware of the zodiacal and planetary associations of each Major Arcana card is not essential to read Tarot, knowing them is likely to give you a more rounded idea of some of the card meanings and their relation to the spiritual realm.

Each Major Arcana card is ruled by a zodiacal sign or one of the planets, as follows:

0 The Fool-Uranus

I The Magician-Mercury

II The High Priestess-The Moon

III The Empress-Venus

IV The Emperor-Aries

V The Hierophant-Taurus

VI The Lovers-Gemini

VII The Chariot-Cancer

VIII Strength-Leo

IX The Hermit-Virgo

X Wheel of Fortune Jupiter

XI Justice-Libra

XII The Hanged Man-Neptune

XIII Death-Scorpio

XIV Temperance-Sagittarius

XV The Devil-Capricorn

XVI The Tower-Mars

XVII The Star-Aquarius

XVIII The Moon-Pisces

XIX The Sun-The Sun

XX Judgement-Pluto

XXI The World-Saturn

If you remember that each suit of the Minor Arcana is related to an element, you also have three zodiac signs associated with each suit:

Cups (Water): Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces

Coins (Earth): Virgo, Taurus, Capricorn

Wands (Fire): Aries, Leo, Sagittarius

Swords (Air): Aquarius, Libra, Gemini

* EXERCISE 11.2

Using prior knowledge or a little research on what each of the zodiac signs and planets signifies, try to consider how that relates to the associated Major Arcana cards. For instance, what do you know about the planet Mercury?

Hint: for the planets you may find it easier if you also consider the Roman deities they get their names from. You might like to brainstorm some of the signs or planets: what does "Venus" remind you of?

Zodiac signs have also been linked to the Court Cards, and the system of decans and the associated Hebrew seventy-two letter name of God have been linked to the Minor Arcana, which will be examined in further detail when we reach the later lessons.

The Sun and Moon in Neoplatonism

Before studying the Sun and Moon cards of the Tarot it may be useful to explore some of the ideas surrounding these two celestial bodies, which were prevalent among ancient philosophers-particularly the Neoplatonists, who had such a great influence upon the development of magical thinking (and thus Tarot, astrology, and alchemy).

We know that around the second to fourth centuries CE it was believed that the Moon was a force of genesis, a gateway through which the soul had to pass in order to manifest in a human body. Neoplatonism already held that this world was just a pale imitation of a "World of True Forms," and therefore this process of genesis was usually viewed as a process that needed to be overcome. Thus, the Moon became an agent of illusion but also of life, a gateway to shadow. The Sun, conversely, was viewed as an agent of illumination that burned away the illusion of nighttime. Several popular cults at the time revolved around a Sun-God such as the Roman cult of Mithras. Mithras, the Hypercosmic Sun, vanquished the lunar forces in the shape of a bull (Porphyry, a contemporary writer and Neoplatonist, wrote that the bull was a symbol of the Moon) so that his followers would be able to pass back through the gates of the Moon and achieve apogenesis (the soul's liberation) from this world.

Thus, the Moon was a symbol of manifestation, illusion, shadows, and imitation, while the Sun was a potent symbol of liberation, realization, illumination, and freedom.

This dichotomy is made clear in Plato's Cave Allegory, found in Republic. In this allegory, there is a cave that contains hundreds of prisoners who have been born into such a life; they are chained to a rock staring at the blank wall of the cave and have never seen the sunlight. Behind the rock is a large fire, and the guards are making shadow puppets on the walls of the cave so that all the prisoners see is shadows. They believe these shadows to be the entirety of the world, and know no different. However, one day a prisoner breaks free, and stumbles out of the cave into the sunlight, whereupon he is blinded by the intense light he is unaccustomed to. When his eyes adjust, he sees his reflection in a pool of water, and looks around him to discover that his previous life was a lie.

In this allegory, the Sun is a force of illumination in comparison to the dark shadow of the lunar cave (in the Mithraic mysteries the cave was a symbol of this world) in which men's souls are kept prisoner with illusion. But the Sun also brings pain-sometimes the truth hurts.

EXERCISE 11.3

Read Plato's Allegory of the Cave in Republic, Book VII. Can you see anything further it has to say about the Sun/Moon dichotomy?

EXERCISE 11.4

Before we begin to study these two cards further, take some time to brainstorm your own ideas about the Moon/Sun dichotomy, and what it means to you. Do you have a particular spiritual or religious background that informs your ideas of these celestial bodies and what they represent? What has your experience of them been?

XVIII The Moon

Before true realization can be attained, it is necessary for the soul to pass through the darkness of the world. In order for the soul to achieve Godhead, it must first manifest into the mundane. In the quest for selfknowledge, we must interact with the world around us, and we find many examples of figures who have become distracted from their quest by the very universe

they must engage in. This is not to say that this world is evil or bad, but that it is not the eventual aim of a spiritual quest: it is a world of hollow shells, no matter how necessary. The Moon is a shadow-self of the Sun, and night time only hides the sunlight in another part of the world-light is still present, but only reflected instead of direct.

Oh, how powerfully the magnet of illusion attracts.

-KARL GUTZKOW

As all diseases have two conjunct causes, one immediate, external and exciting, the other constitutional, internal, and predisposing, so it is with Dreams, which are Dis-Eases, or unbalanced States of Consciousness, Disturbers of Sleep as Thoughts are of Life.

-ALEISTER CROWLEY

By moonlight, deceptive arrangements are made. Spies operate in shadows, and star-crossed lovers meet in secret. The landmarks and people we know so well by day look very different in the moonlight-thus, truth does exist in this card, but only enough truth to inform a clever illusion or deception. But only after traversing the path of the Moon, its barren wastes, can we find the source of the truth.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Moon: The celestial body itself; night, darkness, shadow; associated throughout history with lunacy, madness, lovers' trysts, hysteria, and flux.

Wolves: The call of the wild, a call to madness and lunacy.

Dogs: The domesticated brother of the wolf, still retaining a little wildness-the potential for madness and the shadow-self is ever-present.

Towers: Placed on either side of the pathway they remind us of the need for balance in the path of the Moon: to stray too far to either side would be disastrous.

Water: Flux and change: the tides of the ocean are controlled by the Moon, and it is believed that the water in the human body is controlled similarly.

Crayfish: Emerging from the water, this crustacean represents humankind emerging from the primitive ocean, the first stages of awareness; it is also a zodiacal symbol of Pisces.

Pool: This can be seen as a mirror in which the world is reflected: the Moon is a reflection of the sun's light; a mirror reflects reality but not accurately.

Anubis: The Egyptian guardian of the Underworld, the man-jackal that marks a transition point, and the entrance to the Shadow/Moon world.

Gateway: A transition point, initiation into a new stage of understanding.

Blood.- In some cards this is specifically menstrual blood, symbolizing hormonal changes and the nature of flux, as well as the first stirrings of life (truth) showing the promise of full life in the Sun card.

Scarab: Representing the Egyptian Sun-God in his form as a scarab beetle, the form that is Kephra, the Sun in the Underworld at night-time.

KEYWORDS: Deception, deceit, trickery, fraud, shape shifting, flux, emotions, fantasy, illusion, imagination, fear, confusion, lies, secrecy, half-truths, distraction, chaos, enchantment, intuition, instinct, tides, water, romance, flirting, seduction

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: The initial stages of Plato's Cave Allegory in Republic, (discussed above) are an excellent illustration of this card. If we view this card as the confrontation with the Shadow-self, then it can also be seen in Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, when Luke Skywalker confronts an image of his father, Darth Vader, in a mysterious cave. He battles him and kills him, only to discover his own face staring back at him from beneath the shattered helmet.

As A PERSON: The Moon person is an expert at deception, hiding, and the creation of masks with which to present themselves to the world. They very

rarely show their true personality to people, and are experts at spreading gossip, rumours, and half-truths. However, their expertise lies in finding the grains of truth to lend validity to their fantasies. This card may also indicate somebody who lives most of their life in a realm of fantasy, half sane and half mad. They can be wild, unpredictable, and ever-changing, making them attractive to others.

EXERCISE 11.5

- Take the Moon card from your deck and examine it. What symbols stand out for you? How do you feel when you look at the card? Record in your Tarot journal your intuitive response to this card.

- Spend a month keeping a Dream Diary. Every night before you go to sleep, tell yourself you will remember your dreams. As soon as you wake up in the morning, record the dreams you have had. At the end of every day, look over last night's dream and try to interpret the symbols or events that appeared in it. Note, in particular, how you engage with your night time self-what does your subconscious reveal to you in the half-language of dreams?

- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5.

- Read the collection of Grimm's Fairy Tales. These fairy tales are some of the oldest written versions of the popular tales we have been raised on, and they are darker, full of the fears of the childish subconscious. How do you feel they represent the individual journey through the manifest universe?

Questions for Journaling

- What does the Moon (the body that orbits the Earth) mean to you? What does it represent?
- How has fear manifested in your life?
- What does the concept of illusion mean to you?

- How have you coped with fantasy and imagination on a personal level?
- Does this card scare you or welcome you?
- Do you gravitate more towards the wolf or the dog? Why are these two animals on the card?
- Why is the pool of water present in the image?
- Are there any symbols in this card that are found in other cards? What does this suggest for the Moon?

XIX The Sun

The sun doesn't really die every night, but is merely hidden on the other side of the world. Thus, after every darkness comes the bright light of a new day. For humankind the sun gives us the light and heat necessary for survival and continued growth. It allows us to see beauty and go about our daily life; without it there would be no life upon earth. For millennia it has also been a symbol of divine light and blessing, and as the center of our solar system it reminds us that the spirit should be at the heart of all our endeavors.

Happiness is a state of mind.

And of all illumination which human reason can give, none is comparable to the discovery of what we are, our nature, our obligations, what happiness we are capable of, and what are the means of attaining it.

-ADAM WEISHAUP

This card is a representation of illumination, realization, and enlightenment that comes after darkness; it is the joy, happiness, and bliss that come through self-awareness and spiritual evolution. Truth can often be painful, just as staring at the sun will blind you, so this card can also bring harsh reality into focus. Usually the Sun brings with it joyful experiences, and the knowledge of the soul and its will. It can also be seen as the state of

true innocence that comes from self-awareness, which removes the need for falsehood, agendas, and worry. It is a return to Paradise.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Sun: The celestial body itself; light, life, happiness, illumination, optimism.

Child: Innocence, carefree, happiness. A single child on a white horse is probably a reference to the revelation of a Sun God in the Chaldean Oracles.

Two children: The twins, like a single child, represent childlike innocence and freedom. They may also be Adam and Eve before the Fall, and in the Thoth deck are a direct reference to the role of the Children in the Gnostic Mass.

Garden: The Garden of Eden, paradise. Also growing things, life evolving.

Butterfly: Carefree, beautiful, and colorful, the butterfly represents the vibrancy of nature.

White horse: Ridden by the child; see above.

Flag. • Carried by the child; see above.

Rose: Upon the flag; this rose is usually white and therefore signifies the alchemical rose of pure spiritual attainment, innocence.

Sunshine: Happiness, joy, abundance.

Sunflowers: Sunflowers move their heads to follow the sun throughout the day. They represent optimism and hope.

Dancing: Happiness and joy, a vivid image of a human being reveling in life.

Nudity: Innocence and liberty; Adam and Eve were naked before the Fall.

Rainbow: In many traditions a symbol of God's covenant with humankind, a divine promise. It is also produced when sunlight refracts through the rain-another symbol of optimism and hope.

KEYWORDS: Evolution, growth, enlightenment, truth, honesty, source, saviour, ascension, illumination, improvement, learning, expanding horizons, harsh reality, experience, awareness

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: Toward the end of *The Return of the King*, following the destruction of the One Ring in the fires of Mordor, Frodo is finally released from his burden and anguish. Having traveled for many months under the darkness of Sauron's growing power and the evil influence of the Ring, he is able to rest and grow once more. His reunion with his friends is the bliss and joy of the Sun.

As A PERSON: This points to somebody who is possibly one of the most optimistic people ever! They are always looking on the bright side of life, and are constantly in awe of life and creation. They are curious and inquisitive, adore learning new things, and fill their lives with everything they enjoy. They are physically fit and healthy, and their minds are vibrant, constructive, and keen. This person may, however, become arrogant or egotistical when unbalanced, believing that the universe revolves around them.

EXERCISE 11.6

- Take the Sun card out of your deck and examine it. What scene is depicted? Is it one of two children dancing? Adults rejoicing? A single child on a horse? Or something else? Why do you think this is? What other symbols appear in the card that strike you or are different to those listed above?
- Make a vow to yourself: for one month you will aim to do at least one thing each day that makes you truly happy, soothes your soul, and helps you grow and learn. Keep a diary so you can record what you do each day. Also note how it makes you feel, and how it affects other areas of your life.

- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5.
- Do some research on the Sun in world mythology: is it associated with a particular kind of figure? What role does it play? Where does it stand in the cosmology of that culture? How is it viewed?

Questions for Journaling

- What makes you truly happy?
- What brings bliss and joy into your life?
- How do you celebrate?
- Are you innocent? What does innocence mean to you?
- How do you channel happiness into the world around you?
- What was the last experience you had of a moment of realization?
- What is the source of your growth and evolution?
- Do you feel you are still growing as a person, or do you feel stunted?
- What parts of your life do you wish to improve on?

XX Judgement

Mankind moves ever onwards in the process of discovery and invention, and the more we look outside ourselves to the universe around us the more we understand and realize. Our evolutionary cycle of gaining new knowledge inspires in us, every now and then, a rebirth of some kind. We may find ourselves outgrowing a particular spiritual path and moving on to something more suitable to our current understanding; we may find that a certain mode of thinking is no longer useful. When this happens, we undergo a rebirth like a phoenix from the ashes, liberating ourselves from the shackles of outdated habits, thoughts, and beliefs.

Man is free at the moment he wishes to be.

-VOLTAIRE

The title "Judgement" can be misleading, for this card does not indicate a process of judging or choice; it instead refers to the Christian "Judgment Day," when the dead rise from their graves and the good souls achieve heaven. The image of the dead rising from their graves reminds us of the act of rebirth and leaving behind our bonds, liberating ourselves from ignorance. Aleister Crowley thought the title so misleading that he changed it to "The Aeon," indicating the process whereby mankind progresses in his understanding of the universe-the change in accepted thinking from one paradigm to another.

COMMON SYMBOLS

Angel: The angel Gabriel is said to be the one who will announce the coming of Judgment Day. Note that in the Rider-Waite deck and its derivatives this angel is in the same position (top, center, in between the male and female figures) as in the Lovers and Devil cards.

Trumpet: This instrument is usually blown by the announcing angel; it also calls people to awakening and stirs them out of ignorance.

Flag: Usually bearing an equal-armed cross, this can be a symbol of triumph.

Resurrection: The dead being resurrected fully formed from their graves symbolizes the awakening of the soul into perfection, and the liberation of the alchemical Philosopher's Stone from the mundane earth to spiritual attainment.

Rising: Similar to resurrection, the image of people rising upward indicates a movement toward higher understanding, or the process of rising above our bonds.

Sunlight: This contains all the symbolism of the Sun card, above.

Phoenix: An ancient symbol of rebirth and renewal, the phoenix was reborn from an egg that incubated in the still-warm ashes of its dead self. It reminds us that our old ways of thinking, while being transcended, provide us with the fuel with which we can transcend; all our present actions are based on past actions.

Embryo: The newly awakened realization itself, being born and waiting to become whole.

Broken chains: An evocative symbol of liberation and freedom.

Coffins.- Can symbolize old ways of thinking or the mundane world that is being risen from.

Cauldron: The "Cauldron of Rebirth" is another form of the womb in which embryos are nurtured until they are liberated from it.

KEYWORDS: Rebirth, assessment, examination, change in outlook, perspective, or lifestyle, aspirations, spiritual goals, transformation, ascent, freedom, liberation, healing, judgment, union

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: In The Lord of the Rings trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien, we are given the story of Gandalf the Grey and how he becomes Gandalf the White. When he sets out with Frodo and his companions, he is Gandalf the Grey, a wise and powerful wizard. But he sacrifices himself so that the company can escape the Mines of Moria when a Balrog attacks them, and during the fight in the depths of the earth he is almost killed, his body burned, and his magical prowess tested. Finally, after killing the Balrog, he remains unconscious for a long time, before undergoing a transformation and escaping the place-no-place that he is trapped in. Upon his return he becomes Gandalf the White, a wiser, more powerful wizard who is closer to the ultimate reality than before. Like the phoenix, from the ashes he is reborn.

As A PERSON: This card rarely indicates a person, but when it does, it shows somebody who is deeply spiritual, wise, and who seems to have transcended the need to be bothered by society's views of them. Their daily

life seems like one never-ending prayer, and all their acts are aimed at moving onwards to higher understanding. Their ideas are never stuck in one place, as with every new discovery they change.

* EXERCISE I1-7

- Take the judgement card out of your deck. What is it called in your deck? This is a card that is often significantly different depending on the deck, as the Christian imagery of the Day of judgment does not speak to most Tarot readers or deck creators. What image does your card show? How do you feel about this?
- How do you think this card is different to that of Death? What subtle differences are there between the liberation of judgment and the change of Death? Are they both the same kind of rebirth?
- Read some Buddhist sacred texts in which Buddha's teachings are recorded. Focus in particular on the aspect wherein Buddha teaches of liberation from the mundane world of suffering, transcendence, and non-attachment. It is not assumed that you agree with Buddhist ideas about the world, but the teachings on the nature of liberation will give you an understanding of this card.
- Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 can also be used with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What does rebirth mean to you?
- What rebirths have you experienced in your life?
- What happens after this?
- What things have you managed to free yourself from in the past?
- What are your spiritual goals?

- What parts of your self or your life do you feel need examining and changing for the better?
- What symbols appear in your judgement card, and what do they mean?
- How does the card image make you feel?

VI The Lovers

At first, this card seems to be nothing more than a lesson on love between two people. Indeed, it can indicate the forces of love and romance in our lives, since they are such powerful influences upon us and the choices we make. But the act of falling in love and entering into a relationship is an act of moving our perspective from "Me, Myself, and I" to one of "I and Thou"-the recognition of somebody as a reflection of the Divine and of oneself. The ability to form relationships is also the ability to yearn for the Divine. However, the Lovers card does not indicate the union of two people or forces, but rather their separate natures-for yearning cannot occur if the two are already One.

Falling in love is actually a powerful experience of feeling the Universe move through you. The other person has become a channel to you, a catalyst that triggers you to open up to the love, beauty, and compassion within.

-SHAKTI GAWAIN

This card is the first stage in the solve et coagulum of the alchemical process, first discussed in the Temperance card. It is the marriage between two opposing and separate forces before they can begin to react with each other and become united in Temperance. Thus, this card can be seen as a representation of the worlds of spirit and matter, Divine and mundane, interacting and reacting to each other. In mythical terms, this is also a card of recognition of the "Other Self," and a realization that this Other Self bears the same origins as ourselves. It therefore gives rise to a yearning to be united with the Other Self as a result of yearning for our origins. Similarly, it

is often said that our chosen lovers act as a reflection for parts of our selves, holding up a mirror to our lives.

For I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union.

-ALEISTER CROWLEY

COMMON SYMBOLS

Man/woman: Symbolically representing the opposite forces of masculine and feminine, active and passive, which yearn toward each other.

Bride/bridegroom: Following on from the above, the bride and bridegroom represent the uniting of the two separate forces.

Adam/Eve: A Biblical representation of the above two symbols, but also a representation of the process of choice between one thing and another thing: the process of discernment and discrimination, the ability to separate things in one's mind.

Angel: Divine agency, and a recurring symbol throughout the Major Arcana.

Fire/water: Opposing forces, reiterating the symbolism of masculine/feminine, active/passive.

Priest: The figure that performs the wedding ceremony that unites the bride and groom.

Third woman: In some older decks, a man has to choose between two women. His choice can be a moral one, since some decks have the third woman as a harlot in stark contrast to the first woman, who is modest and pure.

Spear/chalice: In many traditions, the unity of spear and chalice represents sexual union or the phallus and vagina.

Sword: The Kabbalistic letter for this card is Zayin, or sword, relating to the separate nature of the two forces, and the act of discrimination and choice

or of division.

Heart: A symbol of love, romance, and emotion.

Cupid/Eros: The force that begets love and passion in people.

KEYWORDS: Love, relationships, marriage, happy relationships, friendship, harmony, the Other, origin, return, recognition, union, reunion, integration, separation, polarity, teamwork, sibling friendship, passion, alchemy, sexuality

IN LITERATURE AND FILM: In Egyptian mythology we find the story of Isis and Osiris, the Divine sibling-lovers whose relationship formed the model for both the marriage between Pharaoh and his wife and any common marriage. Their status as siblings highlights the fact that the Lovers card can indicate a desire for return to one's origins. One particular aspect of the story tells how their jealous brother Set killed Osiris and dismembered him, scattering the fourteen pieces of his body throughout Egypt. Isis sought the pieces far and wide, and eventually succeeded in reuniting them all save one-his penis, which had been eaten by a Nile crab. To replace it, Isis fashioned a penis from a reed and used this to conceive a son from her husband's mummified corpse. The story represents the way that other people can help us reunite the missing pieces of our selves.

As A PERSON: Rarely does this card indicate a person. However, it can suggest a couple or siblings, or a relationship between two people based on very different perspectives. Their relationship works because of their differences, rather than in spite of them.

EXERCISE 11.8

- Take the Lovers card out of your deck. Does your card depict two people? Three? What other figures are in the card? What do you think is happening? Is love or marriage depicted?
- If you can, get hold of a Thoth deck by Aleister Crowley or find images of it online. Take the Empress, Emperor, Lovers, and

Temperance from the deck and line them up: who are the figures in the Lovers? What symbols appear in the Temperance card that also appear in the Lovers? What colors dominate? And what do you think this means?

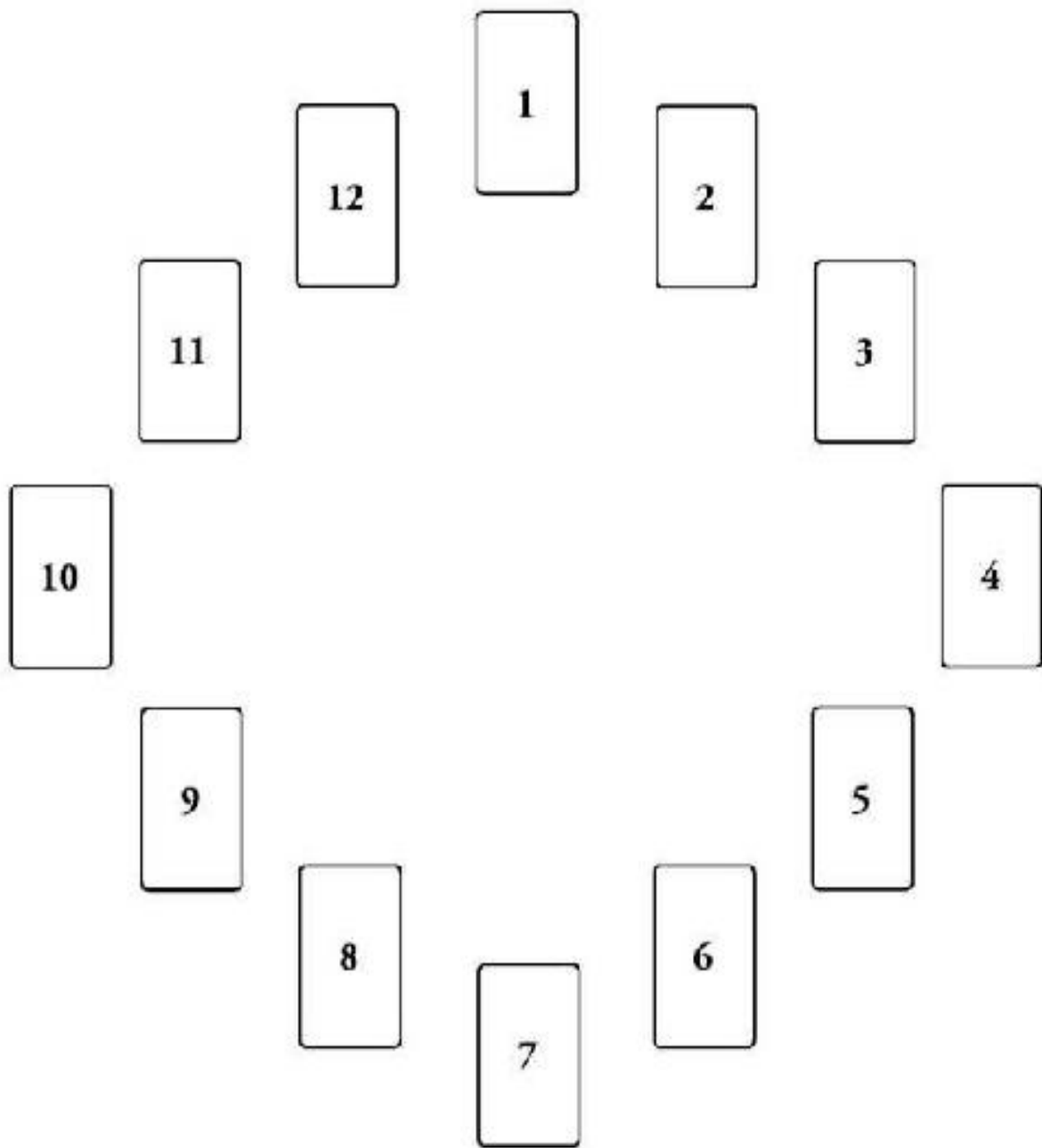
- You can also use Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 with this card.

Questions for Journaling

- What does the concept of integration mean to you?
- What prerequisites do you think you need for a successful relationship?
- What is love, and what are its effects on people?
- What have been your experiences of love?
- What forms may love take?
- Have you had an experience of recognition of "The Other"?
- What opposing facets do you have in your self, life, and personality? How are/might these facets be integrated?

The Astrological Spread

This Tarot spread is large and can become complex, so it is advised only for questions that are equally as complex. It is not to be used for everyday questions, but rather as the yearly outlook spread or for very important issues. Each card position is assigned to one of the twelve signs of the zodiac and thus the associations of that sign.



Astrological Spread

Card 1. Aries: Personal appearances, how you appear to others

Card 2. Taurus: Resources and values, both possessions and talents

Card 3. Gemini: Environment and perceptions: how you perceive and interact with your environment

Card 4. Cancer: Home and nurture

Card 5. Leo: Creativity, recreation and sexuality

Card 6. Virgo: Service, duty and health

Card 7. Libra: Cooperation and opposition

Card 8. Scorpio: Death and rebirth, karmic return

Card 9. Sagittarius: Philosophy, spirituality, diversity

Card 10. Capricorn: Career, ambition and public standing

Card 11. Aquarius: Ideals, friends and allies

Card 12. Pisces: Surrender, sacrifice, secrecy

Optional Homework

- Make a Tarot journal entry for one or all of the above cards. You can use the above exercises, or work with the cards in your own way. You might like to make a collage of them, write a haiku, or write a short story inspired by their themes.
- Try the Astrological spread for yourself or somebody else. To make it easier, you should do some brief research on the zodiacal signs and the areas of life they relate to, so you can relate this to the cards in more detail. You will probably find that you begin to form your own ideas about the zodiac and thus your Astrological Spread will be slightly different.
- To prepare for the next lesson, think of three questions you might ask a Tarot reader.

Further Reading

The Emerald Tablet of Hermes, available in several translations online, for more about "As Above, So Below."

Republic, Book VII, by Plato, for the Allegory of the Cave (The Moon and Sun).

Grimm's Fairy Tales, for an insight into the weird and wonderful world of the subconscious as informed by the human imagination (The Moon).

Astrology for Dummies, by Rae Orion, is an excellent introduction to astrology, very useful for the astrological symbolism of the cards.

12

CREATING YOUR OWN SPREADS

We have already explored the nature of Tarot spreads and how they can be used to create efficient and accessible readings for others and ourselves. However, you may have already discovered during your practice readings that a particular question doesn't seem to quite fit a spread you have been using from this book or somewhere else. One of the card positions is irrelevant or you don't understand it; the question is too complex or too simple for that spread; or there are too many/few cards in the spread. Maybe you have a specific question and you just can't find a spread that fits the theme. At times like these, it is vital that you know how to create your own spreads, so that you never need to rely on a book or the Internet again.

EXERCISE 12.1

Re-read Lesson 5 ("The Purpose of a Reading") and consider again what a querent wants out of a reading. Keep these things in mind when you create your spreads later in this lesson, as they will help you decide what features need to be present in the spread to best answer the question.

The Features of a Spread

What actually makes up a Tarot spread? If you've looked at a number of spreads by now, you may have noticed they often share similar card positions, like "The Past" or "Advice." This isn't just a lack of creativity on the creator's part, but simply an acknowledgement of the fact that many people who have questions want them answered in certain ways: they want information about what is happening now, how it has become like that, what is likely to happen in the future, and how they can prevent/support/make the most of it. Even in spreads where each card position is based on a theme (such as last lesson's Astrological Spread), the same issues are raised.

EXERCISE 12.2

Brainstorm as many card positions as you can think of. Note that card positions do not have to be simple words such as "Past" but can be an entire question, for example: "How does this change affect my love life?" Some examples include:

- How the Other Person feels
- Advice
- Short-Term Future
- Long-Term Future
- Home life

You will notice that these positions can be organized into categories:

- **Timeline:** This includes "Past," "Present," and "Future" and shows us how influences from the past have affected our present situation and how the actions and choices we make now can affect the future possibilities. This category can also include month-by-month timelines for yearly readings.
- **Advice:** Sometimes a simple "Advice" card will suffice, but often you will find that specific kinds of advice are needed, like "What will happen if x occurs?" "How can I respond positively to x?"
- **Areas of Life.** There are a number of popular spreads out there that give a general overview of somebody's life by individually examining different areas of life. In Lesson 9 we saw some of those spreads ("Spheres of Life" spread and "Elemental Spread"). Often these spreads have themes, such as the Elemental Spread, where life is split into four areas based on the elements.
- **Personal:** These card positions are miscellaneous, and are often found in spiritual or fun spreads, like "Your strengths" or "How you respond to obstacles."

Each spread you create will need different kinds of card positions, depending on the spread's theme, the question it has been created to answer, and how extensive you want it to be.

Creating a Simple, Short, Purpose-Driven Spread

EXERCISE 12.3

In the last lesson, you should have recorded up to three basic questions that you think somebody would ask a Tarot reader. Choose one of the simplest questions you have written-this is the question we will use to create your first, very basic, Tarot spread. Before we begin, review Lesson 9: "Different Types of Spreads." Note that the spread we are about to create, because it answers a specific question, is "Purpose-Driven," and we are creating something simple, so ideally it will be a small rather than large spread.

1. The first step in creating a Purpose-Driven spread is to identify the different parts of the question. Something that seems simple on the surface, like "How is my relationship with X going?" may contain several parts that need answering in order to give a coherent and useful answer. It requires us to look at various aspects of the querent's life in relation to their romantic life. In this case, we might need to know:

- How the querent feels the relationship is going
- How their partner feels the relationship is going
- What the querent needs from the relationship
- What the partner needs
- The role the querent plays in the relationship
- The role the partner plays
- External factors affecting the relationship
- Advice for the future
- What will happen in the future (short term/long term)

For your question, write down as many parts as you can think of, like above-regardless, for now, of whether you think you'll put them all into your final spread!

2. Now choose three to five of those parts that you think would be most useful to a querent in a short reading. You might wish to review Lesson 5 ("The Purpose of a Reading") again and keep in mind what the querent wants out of the reading. The parts of the question that you have chosen will become the card positions for your spread, so you'll need to ensure that they are worded in such a way that they are positive and easy to understand. For instance, instead of "The querent and their partner," you

might have the position as "How the querent relates to their partner in the relationship" or "How the couple relate to each other."

3. When you have done this, you will need to consider how a reading progresses from start to finish. What do you think it would be best to answer first? The questions about future events? The feelings of the couple? Past events? The order in which the cards are placed on the table in a spread is usually the order in which they are interpreted, and for ease of understanding it is best to keep things in chronological order. Some things to bear in mind are:

- Past events first, followed by Present, and finally Future.
- Give background before detail so that you have a backdrop on which to place the rest of the reading. For instance, you could have a single card position for "The relationship in general at this time" and give further detail later with specific cards for "What the querent loves about the relationship at this time" or "Challenges facing the relationship at this time." Past events are also classified as background as they have influenced the current events, and thus reading about them first allows you to see a causal link and provide information with which you can better understand the Present.
- Advice comes last. An advisory card position is usually best interpreted toward the end of the reading, as it can offer help relating to specific issues that have been raised earlier in the reading. There's no point giving the querent advice on something neither of you has seen yet. By reading the Advice cards last, you can apply the advice more specifically and therefore more practically.

4. By now you should have a list of question parts, in order of how you'd approach them in a reading. These are the card positions of your spread, and you could lay them down in a straight line right now and do the reading. In fact, many excellent and practical spreads that answer specific questions like this are created on the spot in front of a querent, and thus the reader will not have time to put the cards in a meaningful

pattern. Laying the cards in a line from left to right and reading them as you would read a sentence in a book makes sense for a reading that moves from the past through the present (with all its considerations) to things in the future. Not only does the reader find it easy to engage with the spread, but the querent can also follow it easily.

5. As the finishing touch for your spread, you could design a pattern in which to lay the cards. This can be fun and creative, and will depend entirely on the question you have asked and the way you have chosen to answer it. For instance, if you had chosen to answer "How will having a baby at this time affect me?" you may have approached it by considering the varying aspects of the querent's life: emotional, mental, social, spiritual, physical. Such things may bring to mind a form of symbolism that you can use-in this case we might think of the four elements with "spirit" in the middle, or a five-pointed star. It is important to remember, however, that the patterns of spreads aren't just there to look pretty: they are there so that you can quickly and easily see what card position 4 or 7 is. If you are already familiar with the idea that East is Air, and therefore the mental area of life, seeing a card placed on the far right of a four-card spread will instantly tell you what it relates to.

EXERCISE 12.4

Imagine that the famous Italian lover, Giacomo Casanova, has come to you for a Tarot reading with a specific concern: he is in love with the fiancée of another man, and wishes to not only make his feelings known to the woman but to eventually make her his wife. Giacomo wants to know if it would be worth the effort to woo the lady or if his attentions will be shunned, or worse-if the other man will find out! Create a simple, three to five card spread to answer his concerns.

EXERCISE 12.5

If you want more practice at creating short, purpose-driven spreads, you can try your hand at these querents and their questions:

- A young, blonde, blue-garbed woman wishes to know what will happen if she follows a white rabbit down a rabbit hole.
- Three kings from the Orient are seeking somebody; they are lost and need advice on how best to find him, as well as any advice you can give regarding the best gifts to bring him.
- A woman is sharing a house with seven men. She's finding it difficult keeping up with the chores, as the men never help around the house and expect her to do all the cooking and cleaning. She wants to know how she can get them to help, and what will happen in the long run with the housemates.
- A middle-aged man and his wife are having severe money problems. They can no longer afford to feed themselves and their two children, and need cash fast. The man wants to know how best to alleviate their problems.

Since it is likely that you will be creating spreads like these for others during a reading, you'll need to be able to create them quickly and on the spot. Try timing yourself to see how long you take-more than three minutes will create a bored querent!

A Note on Patterns and Card Positions

It is important to remember that some Tarot spreads don't have card positions at all. The ones for specific questions are more easily interpreted with positions, but sometimes a question just needs a general examination. In cases like this, it may be useful to just lay out a chosen number of cards in any pattern you choose and read them as a whole. This style of reading relies a lot more on your ability as a reader to see the links between cards in relation to the question, and can therefore be more difficult. It can also act as a way of getting a general overview before deciding with the querent what specific aspects should be examined.

With such readings you may find it helpful to use a spread pattern, as it will act symbolically to help you draw meaning from the cards without

specific positions. For instance, a vertical line of three cards in a six-card reading may strike you during interpretation as building blocks on top of each other, or a raising of consciousness; you may notice that two Court Cards from the same suit fall next to each other like a couple; three Cups cards surrounding a Court Card speaks volumes.

This style of reading takes some practice, but the principles of recognizing patterns in your reading regarding the cards and their positions can be useful in specific spreads as well.

Creating Other Types of Spreads

You may have noticed already that many of the Tarot spreads online and in books are not created for specific questions. They may be general spreads that can be used for a variety of issues; they may be fun spreads inspired by a television show, sacred festival, myth, the natural world, everyday items, or the characters in a book. These kinds of spreads can become something more than useful ways of reading the cards: they can be methods of integrating a newly discovered insight into your spiritual understanding. They can also become beautiful gifts for somebody on a special occasion (such as a "Three Fairies Spread" for a newborn baby, or a "Now You're Retired" spread!) Many of them will become solid favorites that you can use regularly for general readings or certain types of questions.

The creation of such spreads works on similar principles to those above for purpose-driven spreads. You need to:

1. Identify your theme and (if relevant) the question area, like the theme of "Mythical Creatures" for a spread about imagination, or the simpler theme of "Creative Process" for a spread about a writing project.
2. Ask yourself what aspects of the question area you need to know about, and write them down. Choose a number of them that best suits your reading size (I wouldn't recommend anything larger than fifteen cards, however).

3. If necessary, choose some images, symbols, or other things linked to your theme upon which you can base your spread pattern or the card positions. For example, a spread based on the symbol of a sword could be in the shape of a sword-a card for the sword tip could become "The point of the venture"; a card for the sword hilt could indicate "How the querent grasps the situation." You may find it easier to draw out an image that you wish to form into the spread pattern, and then add some card positions. Where those card positions are on the picture can begin to suggest to you some useful parts of the spread.
4. Not all spread shapes and card positions are inspired by an image. Some spreads are created around a concept, such as "Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis," "The Nine Lives of a Cat," or "The Twelve Days of Christmas." In cases like these, you should think of a simple shape that lends itself to the concept you are using-a circle of nine cards for the Cat's Lives, a Christmas tree for the Twelve Days, or three cards in a row for Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis.

* EXERCISE 12.6

Using the symbol of a tree with branches and roots, create a short five or six-card spread for issues of creative projects, like a novel or painting somebody is undertaking. What other issues or questions do you think could be applied to a tree-shaped spread?

For further practice at creating your spread shape and positions, try your hands at these:

- The rainbow for a general spread
- A house (with windows and doors) for a spread about something of your choice
- Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Man for a self-reflection spread

EXERCISE 12.7

Create a spread inspired by this traditional British magpie rhyme: "One for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl, four for a boy, five for silver, six for gold, and seven for a secret never to be told." You can use it for a general reading, or anything specific that strikes you as fitting; you can create it in any shape you like. When you're finished, try doing the reading for yourself or a friend.

Finding Inspiration

You may be wondering where you can find inspiration for such spreads. There are dozens of books available for you to look at for spreads created by others (see Further Reading) and there are plenty of truly creative spreads online. However, if you want to find inspiration for yourself, try this:

- Do you find yourself drawn to a particular pantheon of deities or mythology? If so, you could use one of those deities as inspiration for a spread based on their associated myths, symbols, or attributes, like a Triple Brigid spread, or a spread using a number of deities to symbolize different areas of life.
- Are you keen on traveling? You could create a spread for a place that you find very special or a sacred site: a Stonehenge Spread, a Sacred Mountain spread, an Empire State Building Spread!
- Do you have a hobby such as gardening or cooking? Why not create a spread inspired by those processes? A spread for the yearly process of planting, weeding, tending, and harvesting; a spread for the cooking pot filled with spices.
- Are you a fan of a literary series such as the Discworld novels or Harry Potter septology? Why not create a spread inspired by some of the characters, or events, or places in them? A Mirror of Erised spread, a Four Founders of Hogwarts Spread, a Various Places in Ankh-Morpork spread.

- You can also find inspiration in everyday life and objects-look around and see things as symbols.

Optional Homework

- Create at least one spread "inspired by" something, using the suggestions in the previous section. Be as creative as you can, but try and keep the number of cards under ten, for ease of creation and use later. You may find this process of spread creation so addictive that you want to create more-please go ahead! The more you create, the better you will be at it.
- Choose a character from a book or film you are familiar with, and do a short reading for them on a question of your choice, using a spread created within three minutes, on the spot. If you are still unsure about using the Minor Arcana, simply use the Major Arcana alone-this is only for practice, after all.
- In the next lesson, we'll be exploring the Court Cards, so take a little time beforehand to look through the sixteen Court Cards of your deck (they are the four "people cards" at the end of each suit, such as the King of Wands and the Page of Swords.)

Further Reading

Designing Your Own Tarot Spreads, by Teresa Michelson.

Tarot: Get the Whole Story, by James Ricklef Contains information on how to create unique and individual spreads, as well as some spreads by the author himself.

Tarot for All Seasons, by Christine Jerre. Has some interesting spreads inspired by the Pagan Wheel of the Year.

New Age Tarot: Guide to the Thoth Deck, by James Wanless. Not just a guide to the Thoth deck, this book has a spread created for each of the Major Arcana!

www.tarotpassages.com has a section for Tarot spreads, several of which are created by the webmistress Diane Wilkes.

As you read more books on the Tarot, and perhaps books that accompany decks, you will find several of them contain a few unique spreads created by their authors based on certain themes. These are also great inspiration.

I3

COURT CARDS: INTRODUCTION AND APPROACHES

The sixteen Court Cards of the pack are often described as some of the most difficult cards not only to learn but also to interpret in a reading. However,

they are also some of the most popular cards, as they are sometimes associated with the people around us, those who come into our lives, and ourselves. As we will see in this lesson and the following, the Courts are not just people cards, but are far more versatile.

EXERCISE 13.1

It is best if you go through this lesson and the following lesson with the sixteen Court Cards in front of you. Take all sixteen out of your deck, and arrange them in order (Page, Knight, Queen, King) and according to suit, so that you can easily reference them as you study.

A Note on Court Card Titles

If you have a nonstandard Tarot deck, particularly a deck that has a theme, you may have already noticed that your Court Card titles are not the same as those mentioned above. Traditionally, Page, Knight, Queen, and King were the titles used in noble and royal courts to denote rank and station, and it is likely that in Tarot they were used to denote rank for scoring in early Tarot games played throughout Europe. However, today many deck creators have broken with tradition to make it easier for readers to relate to these cards or to better fit their deck's theme. Many decks come with companion books in which the explanation of the change is explained, so it is important that you read this so you are familiar with the title changes. This will prevent any confusion arising as you go through these lessons. You might also want to consider what the new titles in your deck (if there are any) might suggest for the meaning of that card-what do all the, say, Shamans, have in common? All the Learners? All the Children?

Old-Fashioned Views of the Court Cards

Many obstacles that people have when understanding these cards are caused by oldfashioned ideas about them that have become largely defunct with modern developments in Tarot. Possibly the biggest problem is that these cards have medieval titles that most people do not relate to today: Page, Knight, Queen and King. (Some decks also have "Princess" instead of "Page" and "Prince" instead of "Knight.") Such titles may be useful when

determining rank or score in a game played with Tarot cards such as is popular in Europe-but they tell us very little about the card meanings. Therefore, we need to be more considered in our approach to these cards. Following are some outdated ideas about Court Cards that can hold us back.

Gender

Many Tarot decks, especially if they have retained the traditional titles of Page, Knight, Queen, King, or something similar, will depict their Queens as women, and the Kings and Knights as men. They are likely to depict the Pages as younger people of either gender. As we have already discussed in Lesson 4, physical gender in the cards is simply another symbol that contains information about the attributes or energies of a card-thus, a woman on a card may be indicating a passive, receptive, flowing, or reflective nature. Unfortunately, many people-believing that these cards only signify people in reading-fall into the trap of seeing all Queens as women, all Kings and Knights as men, and all Pages (usually, for "gender equality") as women. Many people believe that a King or Knight cannot represent a woman, for instance. This is problematic, as it implies that only women can have the associations of the Queens, and only men the associations of the Kings-which as we know, in the modern world, is incorrect!

* EXERCISE 13.2

Look at the Court Cards in front of you. How has the deck creator assigned gender to them? You may find that if you have a themed deck (particularly the theme of feminism or Goddesses), it has all women for the Courts! Bearing in mind that gender is another Tarot symbol, ask yourself which cards have which gender depicted on them and why. Can you see a pattern? What does this suggest for those cards?

Age

Following on from the gender problem in the Courts, some people look at the age of the figures in the cards and use them as guidelines for what these cards can indicate. This theory says:

Kings: Men over 40

Queens: Women over 40

Knights: Young men

Pages: Young women

While in a few instances you may indeed intuitively see an older man in the King of Swords during a reading, it is dangerous to say that only older men can be the Kings of Swords or Wands! This view is as limiting as the gendered view, and we must remember that while age has an influence upon a personality or lifestyle, it is not the defining feature of a person.

Physical Characteristics

Based on old Romany cartomancy techniques, some people apply hair colors, skin colors, and eye colors to the Court Cards, using the above age and gender assumptions. So:

Swords: Dark hair, swarthy complexion, angular features, dark eyes

Wands: Red hair, fair skin, light eyes, feline/leonine features

Cups: Blonde/fair hair, blue eyes, rounded, angelic features, pale skin

Coins: Brown hair, brown eyes, light skin, square features

Anybody taking a walk down a main street will be able to spot a few problems with this approach to the Court Cards! Firstly, where would the girl with bright pink hair be? What about that albino friend of yours? Your elderly, white-haired grandmother? In fact, anybody who is not Caucasian will be hard-pressed to see themselves in any of the above descriptions.

EXERCISE 13.3

Take a look at your Court Cards. Does your deck depict people of different race? Some of the older decks or Rider-Waite-based decks

may only depict Caucasians, even though they may only be a few years in print. However, many modern Tarot decks recognize the multicultural nature of the Tarot community and the universality of human experience, and depict people of many backgrounds in their Court Cards.

Useful Approaches to the Court Cards

Having learned that the above approaches to the Court Cards are shallow and lacking in practical application, we need to consider how we should view these cards. Obviously they can signify people (though not based on age, gender, or physical appearance!), and most readers view them as such. But what happens when a Court Card appears in a "how you should approach this situation" position? Or a "what will happen next in my career?" position? At times like these, it is clear that the Court Cards should sometimes be interpreted as other things:

- Personality attributes: aggressive, artistic, irresponsible, rash, intelligent, sarcastic, or imaginative
- Approaches to situations: preparedness, acceptance, receptivity, or adaptability
- Events: learning a new skill, undergoing therapy, or starting a new job
- Outcomes of events
- Advisory card
- Careers: therapist, teacher, politician, farmer
- Stages of development: learner, teacher, master
- Feelings: happiness, depression, fear, anticipation

This leaves us with several complexities when faced with Court Cards, both from an interpretation perspective and that of learning them and getting acquainted with them. How does one know which aspect of a Court Card to read when it falls in a spread? Unfortunately, your answer to this will lie in developing your intuition and being able to see card interpretations in relation to the question and spread context. This is a skill you will develop with time and practice, but having an intellectual understanding of various ways you can think about the Court Cards will form a useful foundation upon which you can base your interpretations in a reading, and from there work out how best to read a Court Card. What follows are some systems you can use to better understand and learn these cards, but they are only models that inform your understanding-one is not better than the other. Largely you can view them as fun ways of dressing up the cards and engaging with them.

Elemental Attributes of the Court Cards

As we learned in Lesson 6, each of the four suits of the Tarot are ruled by one of the four elements: Earth (Coins), Air (Swords), Fire (Wands), and Water (Cups). Many authors, including Aleister Crowley, have also attributed an element to the four types of Court Card:

Page: Earth (feminine)

Knight: Air (masculine)

Queen: Water (feminine)

King: Fire (masculine)

By linking both the attributed elements of the suit and the Court Card figures, we can get sixteen different perspectives:

Page of Coins: Earth mixing with Earth/the earthy part of Earth

Page of Cups: Earth mixing with Water/the earthy part of Water

Page of Wands: Earth mixing with Fire/the earthy part of Fire

Page of Swords: Earth mixing with Air/the earthy part of Air

Knight of Coins: Air mixing with Earth/the airy part of Earth

Knight of Cups: Air mixing with Water/the airy part of Water

Knight of Wands: Air mixing with Fire/the airy part of Fire

Knight of Swords: Air mixing with Air/the airy part of Air

Queen of Coins: Water mixing with Earth/the watery part of Earth

Queen of Cups: Water mixing with Water/the watery part of Water

Queen of Wands: Water mixing with Fire/the watery part of Fire

Queen of Swords: Water mixing with Air/the watery part of Air

King of Coins: Fire mixing with Earth/the fiery part of Earth

King of Cups: Fire mixing with Water/the fiery part of Water

King of Wands: Fire mixing with Fire/the fiery part of Fire

King of Swords: Fire mixing with Air/the fiery part of Air

Using these elemental attributes, we need to consider how these elements interact (mix) with each other. What happens when earth is placed in water? What happens when water is sprinkled on earth? What happens when wood (earth) is placed into fire? Considering these basic elemental interactions from our own experience can help us get an idea of the elemental nature of the Court Cards. Similarly, each Court Card figure is the "airy" or "watery" part of the suit's element, such as the watery part of Fire. This suggests that every element has different ways it can relate to the real world or act. In the case of the watery part of Fire, we see Fire's fluid movement, the beautiful

dancing flow of flames; in the case of the earthy part of Water we see the process of crystallization or the solidification of liquids.

EXERCISE 13.4

Take some time for each of the sixteen Court Cards and look at the elemental attributes as given above. Consider not only how the two elements for each card interact in the mundane world, but also what the "earthy," "fiery," "watery," and "airy" part of each suit means to you. It might help for you to review Lesson 6 for inspiration and a reminder of what the elements symbolize. When you have done this, apply your discoveries to the Court Cards-what does it mean that the Queen of Wands is the flowing and dancing of fire's flames? In what way is the Page of Cups the crystallization of Water?

Crowley's Book of Thoth (pages 151-171) serves to highlight the interaction of the elements in the Court Cards further, by assigning a natural occurrence to each based on the elemental attributes. Thus:

Page of Coins: The kingdom, foundation

Page of Cups: Crystallization

Page of Wands: Fuel of Fire

Page of Swords: Fixation of the volatile, materialization of an idea

Knight of Coins: Fluorescence and fructification of Earth

Knight of Cups: Water's elasticity, volatility, catalytic faculty

Knight of Wands: Expanding and volatilizing of Fire

Knight of Swords: Pure Air, intellectual, flexible, and penetrating

Queen of Coins: Mother Earth

Queen of Cups: Water's power of reception and reflection

Queen of Wands:: Fluidity and color of Fire

Queen of Swords: Air's power of transmission

King of Coins: Mountains, earthquakes, Earth as giver of life

King of Cups: Rain and springs/Water's power of solution

King of Wands: Lightning Flash

King of Swords: Rushing forth of wind, the storm

EXERCISE 13.5

If you have a copy of the Book of Thoth, read the chapter on the Court Cards: it expands on the above concepts. If not, spend some time with each card considering these concepts, perhaps meditating on them, or doing a little research on them from a scientific/chemical/natural sciences perspective. The more you discover about these elemental interactions, the deeper your understanding of these cards will become!

The Nature of Each Court Card

We know that each type of Court Card figure bears an element—all the Pages are Earth, for instance. This immediately tells us that there is a shared nature to each type of Court Card; all the Queens have something in common. Using the above elemental system, we can easily create our own version of it that is easier to remember and more personal.

All the Pages are Earth; therefore they all share the qualities of foundation, manifestation, and fertile receptivity in which new beginnings are sown.

All the Knights are Air; therefore they all share the qualities of intellectual curiosity, movement, and transience.

All the Queens are Water; therefore they all share the qualities of reflection, fluidity, receptivity, and the channel for flow.

All the Kings are Fire; therefore they all share the qualities of passion, activity, mastery, and inspiration.

We also know what each suit corresponds to:

Coins: Earth; the mundane, physical world, money and business

Cups: Water; emotions, love, relationships, and social life

Wands: Fire; creativity, sexuality, the ego, the self, and spirituality

Swords: Air; the intellect, conflict, thought, and communication

By putting the suit associations and the Court Card figure associations together, you can find some interesting reflections on the cards. For instance, the Queen of Wands could be the channel of creativity; the Knight of Cups could be the quest for love; the Page of Wands could be the first beginnings of sexuality. Using this system and the elemental system above can inspire you to think about the Court Cards in ways other than as people. In particular these two systems lend themselves well to events or ways for people to interact with the world and others.

EXERCISE 13.6

Using the above, or your own, attributes for the suits and the Court Card figures, write down some sentences like the ones just given to describe each of the sixteen Court Cards. You can create more than one sentence if you like-you will probably find you see a few that make sense. Now consider how you'd interpret these cards, using those sentences, in a reading.

MBTI Types and the Court Cards

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a test that organizes personalities into sixteen different variations that measure psychological preferences in how people make decisions and perceive the world. It was designed to expand upon the theory of Carl Jung, who proposed two different pairs of cognitive functions: thinking and feeling (both "judging" functions) and sensing and intuition (both "perceiving" functions); these functions could be expressed in an introverted or extroverted way. Myers and Briggs sorted these psychological differences into four pairs, giving sixteen personality types. The pairs are: Extraversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, and Judging/Perceiving. Each of these is indicated by the first initial of the word, apart from Intuition, which is indicated by "N." Thus, the sixteen types are formed into four-lettered abbreviations, for example ENFJ (Extraversion, Intuition, Feeling, and Judging).

EXERCISE 13.7

Do a little research on the MBTI test and the meaning of each of the pairs and their subsequent "types." Knowing what Extraversion, Feeling, Judging, etc. indicate will enable you to more fully understand how the MBTI types can be associated with each of the Court Cards. Remember though, that this is not a historical link that should always be made-it is just another way of exploring these cards and understanding them on a variety of levels.

The Courts can be applied to the MBTI types thus:

Page of Coins: ISTP

Page of Cups: ISFP

Page of Wands: INFP

Page of Swords: INTP

Knight of Coins: ESTP

Knight of Cups: ESFP

Knight of Wands: ENFP

Knight of Swords: ENTP

Queen of Coins: ISTJ

Queen of Cups: ISFJ

Queen of Wands: INFJ

Queen of Swords: INTJ

King of Coins: ESTJ

King of Cups: ESFJ

King of Wands.: ENFJ

King of Swords.- ENTJ

You might also like to consider some similarities among the cards' associations: all the Knights and Kings are Extroverts and all the Queens and Pages Introverts; the suits of Cups and Wands are Feeling and the Coins and Swords are Thinking; Kings and Queens are all Judging, Knights and Pages all Perceiving.

Keirsey Temperaments

Although the MBTI and Keirsey Temperaments are not directly associated with one another, David Keirsey used the MBTI to map four temperaments: Artisans, Guardians, Idealists, and Rationals. We can clearly see how these could be applied to the suits:

All Coins Court Cards: Artisans

All Cups Court Cards: Guardians

All Wands Court Cards: Idealists

All Swords Court Cards: Rationals

Further, Keirsey split each temperament into two roles each, and split these roles into a further two role variants each, resulting in sixteen role variants. In relation to the Court Cards they are:

Page of Coins: Crafter

Page of Cups: Composer

Page of Wands: Healer

Page of Swords: Architect

Knight of Coins: Promoter

Knight of Cups: Performer

Knight of Wands: Champion

Knight of Swords: Inventor

Queen of Coins: Inspector

Queen of Cups: Protector

Queen of Wands: Counselor

Queen of Swords: Mastermind

King of Coins: Supervisor

King of Cups: Provider

King of Wands: Teacher

King of Swords: Field Marshal

EXERCISE 13.8

Read up on the Keirsey Temperaments to get a better understanding of the four temperaments, their associated roles, and the role variants. Take some time to consider how the above role variants express or link to the Court Cards and your understanding of them so far. How is the fiery part of Air (King of Swords) like a Field Marshal or an ENTJ?

Both the MBTI and Keirsey Temperaments allow you to explore the Court Cards as personalities with their own goals, ideals, likes, dislikes, and manners of expression. Remember, however, that they are just ways of helping you explore these cards; you don't have to learn them by heart! In the following two lessons, we will explore other systems of looking at the Courts, and hopefully by the time we've finished studying these cards you will have an idea of which systems you prefer to use yourself. Maybe you will even have created your own system, using Exercise 13.6!

Optional Homework

- Go through at least one suit of Court Cards (for example, the Cups Court Cards) and using the above systems begin to write down what you think these cards might mean in a reading. If you have time, try to do this for all sixteen Court Cards. Not only will you have something to compare the upcoming interpretations with, but you'll likely find that these initial discoveries about the card meanings will stick in your mind and come more readily to you when you are reading, as they are your meanings.
- As advised above, try to read the chapter in the Book of Thoth on the Court Cards.
- You might also like to do more research on these cards by reading some of the books on the Further Reading list.

Further Reading

Understanding the Tarot Court, by Mary K. Greer and Tom Little.

The Tarot Court Cards: Archetypal Patterns of Relationship in the Minor Arcana, by Kate Warwick-Smith.

The Golden Dawn Court Cards, by W. Wynn Westcott and Darcy Kuntz.
Has line drawings for Court Cards from the Golden Dawn tradition,
along with an appendix of tables of correspondences for the Courts.

I also highly recommend Internet research for a quick introduction to the MBTI and Keirsey Temperaments.

14

COURT CARDS: CUPS AND COINS

In this lesson, we continue our studies of the Court Cards. As you go through the lesson, think back to last lesson's various approaches to these cards, and ask yourself how some of the card meanings might link to these. Please also remember that the card meanings given here, as with those of the Major Arcana, are just suggestions to get you started: you will undoubtedly discover more meanings yourself through experience, personal feeling, and study that you might prefer or add to these.

The Coins Court

We already know that the suit of Coins is largely concerned with matters of money, the mundane world, everyday life, business, and practical matters. It is also concerned with our physical context-our family or our environment. Thus the Coins Court can represent various ways we interact with or approach this aspect of our lives.

Page of Coins: Earth of Earth/The Kingdom, Foundation/ISTP/Crafter

The Page of Coins is the very first foundation upon which we can place all our plans and pursuits; it is the fertile soil waiting to receive the first seeds, and it is the solid rock beneath our feet. It may not seem like much, this tiny acorn or this minuscule seed, but from it great things grow. This card can signify the beginnings of business plans, a new job, growing finances, fertility, or the need for a stable foundation before moving forward. As a person, the Page of Coins is quiet, reflective, and practical, with immense potential; yet without taking action on the natural resources and talents they have, they may find their plans go no further than the beginning stages.

The Earthy part of Earth represents the foundation or beginning for whatever the suit of Coins signifies. Since Earth is fertile, it can also represent awakening or the first stirring of the energies of the Coins suit: learning to cook, budget, or maintain a household; becoming aware of how to live every day.

Knight of Coins: Air of Earth/Fluorescence and Fructification of Earth/ESTP/Promoter

The Knight of Coins is the reliable friend, steadfast knowledge, and a mind applied to practical tasks. It represents the necessity of hard work and application to achieve any goal, since the mind's keen ideas and calculations are not enough to effect change in the world. Here is the plough and horse tilling the fertile fields, the awareness of nature's cycles and seasons that allows for correct timing. As a person, the Knight of Coins can be slow, seeming to others like a dullard-but his mind is simply applied to the task at hand so fully that nothing else can get his attention! He is patient, reliable, trustworthy, and enjoys physical labor.

The airy part of Earth also represents the quest or search for whatever is signified by the suit of Coins. This can manifest as a quest for money to fund a venture, a search for a job, career, or new home; more abstractly, it can be the search for stability in one's life or a calling that one can be absorbed by.

Queen of Coins: Water of Earth/Mother Earth/ISTJ/Inspector

Here is the flow of bounty from the earth as a result of hard work and application. The Queen of Coins is the nurturing, nourishing force in our life that cares for our everyday needs: our nurses, parents, friends, chefs, paramedics, and doctors. Here is Florence Nightingale with her lantern and the kiss on the bruised knee that makes it all better. This card is also the means or channel by which our finances and everyday concerns can flow in and out of our lives or be spread around them-just as a river carries the rich alluvial soil that will later deposit itself and fertilize the riverbank. This card often appears in a reading to indicate how the flow of one's resources is moving: whether it is blocked or free, needs encouraging, is neglected, or is strong and healthy. As a person, the Queen of Coins is practical, caring, nurturing, and parental-they yearn to help others, heal broken bones, and ensure people are healthy. Sometimes they can seem selfless and altruistic, and indeed they may overwork themselves to help others. They are often excellent cooks, delighting in throwing dinner parties and feeding people.

In a reading, this card can prompt us to ask ourselves how we nurture our lives and bodies. Are our everyday life and our mundane world healthy and thriving? What practical tasks can we undertake to fix what is broken?

King of Coins: Fire of Earth/Mountains and Earthquakes/ESTJ/Supervisor

Here is the king in his castle, ruler of all he surveys! The King of Coins is rather like the boss or business owner, the lord or king; he is the master of his realm. This card shows us complete control, integrated understanding, and mastery of the areas signified by the suit of Coins-finance, wealth, business, health, and everyday life. It is the highest point of the Coins Court, and thus also shows us complete luxury, aesthetic (and culinary!)

appreciation, and the joys of life. Where the Queen of Coins is the production and giving of bounty, the King of Coins is the consumption and enjoyment of it, the comfort that comes after the work is completed and the results are in. He is the moment when, after a long struggle toward a goal, it is suddenly complete and you exhale with relief, drop down into the comfy chair in front of the fire, and pour yourself a glass of brandy.

As a person, the King of Coins is a true connoisseur and aesthete, but only when it comes to food, drink, clothing, and his immediate surroundings. He can lecture for hours on the finer points of wine vintages, and would happily spend all his money on fine dining if given the opportunity. He is never happier than when he is enjoying these things with his friends and family-of whom there are many! The King of Coins is an extremely likeable, jovial character who laughs easily, gives freely and generously, and counts his friends highly.

EXERCISE 14.1

Using the above descriptions (or any other meanings you have created yourself so far), try to link each of the Coins Court Cards to a person you know-either in real life or a character from film and literature.

EXERCISE 14.2

Imagine you are at a dinner party with the Coins Court Cards for an evening. What would each be doing? How would they be interacting with each other and the guests? How do you feel about them?

EXERCISE 14.3

The above descriptions give positive attributes of the cards. What negative attributes do you think each of the Coins Court Cards has? Consider what the positive attributes might become if there were too much of them, for instance. Remember these or write them in your Tarot journal, since the Court Cards do not always fall into a positive place in a spread.

The Cups Court

The suit of Cups is associated with the social aspect of ourselves-our romantic relationships and friendships, the family we choose (rather than the family we are born into). It is also our emotional selves, our feelings, and our inner responses to events. The Cups Court explores the different approaches to this.

Page of Cups: Earth of Water/Crystallization/ISFP/Composer

The Page of Cups is the dream, the intuitive state of mind in which inspiration and ideas can be received; this state of mind is perfect for acts of divination, fortune telling, oracle, and prophecy. It is also perfect for those who wish to undertake creative endeavors-artists, composers, photographers, novelists. From this small, silent, receptive state of mind comes the spark of divine inspiration, and the crystallization of an idea, eventually manifesting in the project. Some call it "divine inspiration," some call it "genius," but no matter what, the Page of Cups is a visionary that gives substance and physical reality to these dreams and fantasies. This card reminds us to pay attention to our dreams, our half-thought-out fantasies, and to use them as inspiration for new projects and paths in life.

As a person, the Page of Cups is often naive, yet others perceive them to be intense and mysterious. They are at once simple on the outside, needing few things to be happy, yet complex on the inside, requiring an immense amount of spiritual and emotional input to remain sane. They can also be prolific creators of works of art, music, and literature. Their attitude to life is one of receptivity: they prefer to observe and take everything in, and rarely comment. When they do, however, the comments are profound and wise.

Knight of Cups: Air of Water/Water's Elasticity, Volatility, and Catalytic Faculty/ESFP/Performer

Here is our Romeo, our knight in shining armor! The heartthrob and dreamboat that many of us dreamed about as teenagers breezes into our lives, changes everything, and doesn't necessarily stick around for long. The

Knight of Cups is the wistful, romantic love for something-not necessarily another person, but sometimes the idealistic romance of an unknown place or path. This card urges us to push forward toward our ideals, holding them as the highest good just as Galahad held the Holy Grail as the perfect end. As the Airy part of Water, the Knight of Cups is the quest or search for all the things represented by the suit of Cups: love, romance, relationships, friendship, or spirituality. It is also the mind applied to these things, and as such can manifest as communication between lovers, or the intellectual process of learning about a spiritual path.

As a person, the Knight of Cups is a romantic at heart, an idealist, always looking for something to fulfil them emotionally and spiritually. Often they may become obsessed with something or somebody they are infatuated with, with their thoughts constantly focused on them.

Queen of Cups: Water of Witter/Reception and Reflection/ISFJ/Protector

Look into the depths of a still lake-does the water's surface change to reflect the observer? As Water of Water, the Queen of Cups is the most receptive, reflective, introspective expression of the suit of Cups and the element of Water-she is the reflective surface of a glassy lake, the fathomless depths of the ocean, and the neverending flow of the river. She is flux and change in response to any situation-she warns against remaining constant or stubborn. Since water nurtures all life on this planet, the Queen of Cups is a Nurturer like the Queen of Coins; however, whereas the Queen of Coins nurtures the body and physical life, the Queen of Cups nurtures and cares for the heart, soul, and emotional life.

As a person, the Queen of Cups does not seem to possess a personality of her own, rather she responds and changes in reaction to her situation and others around her. This is not a manipulative mask-wearing, but simply the nature of the Queen of Cups to completely reflect and receive external influences. They can be extremely emotional and easily hurt, taking things to heart and being affected quickly by circumstances. They are kind, caring, and great listeners. Much of their life goes on inside their heads, however, as their introspective natures often prevent them from acting in situations.

The Queen of Cups prefers to change her outlook rather than the external world.

King of Cups: Fire of Witter/Power of Solution, Rain, and Springs/ESFJ/Provider

The King of Cups is the fiery part of Water, and therefore the active principle of our emotions and feelings: the emotions that dictate our actions and have an influence upon the external world. Due to this influence upon things outside ourselves, the King of Cups often represents active compassion toward others, allowing our emotions to liaise with theirs in shared understanding. This can manifest in group therapy, psychotherapy, art therapy, and any other kind of emotional healing that involves an active participation and engagement with the inner self. Acts of compassion are also represented by this card-counseling, charity work, volunteer work, and any aid or help given. As rain and springs, the King of Cups cleanses and washes away the dirt from our lives. However, too much healing of others can begin to erode away the solidity of our own emotions.

As a person, the King of Cups is like a wise elder, dropping pearls of wisdom almost carelessly; he is kind, compassionate, understanding, and empathic, with a good ear for listening. He encourages active participation in one's emotional state, and although he is emotional himself, he has learned not to get dragged under by the current of his feelings. He manifests in our lives as a father figure, favorite teacher, confidante, or trustworthy old friend. He can also be a peacekeeper in fraught relationships and conflict.

EXERCISE 14.4

Using the above descriptions (or any other meanings you have created yourself so far), try to link each of the Cups Court Cards to a person you know-either in real life, or a character from film and literature.

* EXERCISE 14.5

Imagine that you are back at high school with the Cups Court. What role do they play in the social dynamics of the class? How do you interact with them? What would they be doing? What would their favorite subjects be?

EXERCISE 14.6

The above descriptions give positive attributes of the cards. What negative attributes do you think each of the Cups Court Cards has? Consider what the positive attributes might become if there were too much of them, for instance. Remember these or write them in your Tarot journal, since the Court Cards do not always fall into a positive place in a spread.

Astrological Attributes of the Court Cards

We have already explored a number of systems for learning and interpreting the Court Cards in a previous lesson, however the astrological systems provide another means of integration. We will look at two systems here, one very simple and one more complex. Remember that these are just mnemonic devices or ways of exploring different aspects of the Courts-they don't tell us everything about each card. They can be useful for choosing significators (see below), but should not be used as the sole interpretation of a Court Card in a reading or as the only means of choosing significators.

The simpler Golden Dawn attributes of the Court Cards to the zodiac are as follows:

	<i>Wands</i>	<i>Cups</i>	<i>Swords</i>	<i>Coins</i>
<i>Knight</i>	Sagittarius	Pisces	Gemini	Virgo
<i>Queen</i>	Aries	Cancer	Libra	Capricorn
<i>King</i>	Leo	Scorpio	Aquarius	Taurus
<i>Page</i>	Fire	Water	Air	Earth

Each of the Court Cards is given a zodiac sign, and thus all the attributes of that sign. The four Pages, however, are not given a zodiac sign but instead an element that not only rules the suit but also three of the twelve signs of the zodiac. They can be considered as the seed of the element in the suits, or the raw, untapped element in its natural state, whereas with the other Court Cards the elements are in relation to different energies or aspects of human experience. In this system, the Kings represent the Fixed zodiac signs, the Queens the Cardinal signs, and the Knights the Mutable signs, and each of these qualities has its own associations:

Fixed.- The height of the element or season, stubborn, immovable, the drive and full force of that element or season

Cardinal: Originally called "moveable," the Cardinal signs of the zodiac mark a turning point in between seasons

Mutable. Sitting between two seasons, change and adaptability, communication, and a desire to move forward

As we explored in the previous lesson, all the Kings have something shared between them, as do all the Queens, Knights, and Pages. The recognition of Fixed, Cardinal, and Mutable signs expresses this in another form.

EXERCISE 14.7

Think of some people whose zodiac signs you know, and find which Court Cards they are according to this chart. Compared with the descriptions above, do the cards' attributions fit them? Also consider how the zodiac attributes might relate not only to people's characters but also to events, advice, and feelings. How do these things correlate with the Court Card descriptions above and which you have created yourself?

With the more complex system of astrological attribution for the Court Cards, the cards are each linked to three decans of the zodiac. Each sign of the zodiac is thirty degrees of a 360-degree circle for the complete zodiac.

Each sign is subdivided into three decans, each decan ruling ten degrees of that particular sign. A decan lasts about ten days, as a zodiac sign rules about thirty days of the year. Each Court Card represents a zodiac sign spanned between two signs: the last ten degrees of the preceding sign plus the first twenty degrees of the current sign. Thus, the Knight of Wands rules the last ten degrees of Scorpio and the first twenty degrees of Sagittarius, though the card energies are predominately Sagittarius. With the above system, anybody born on the cusp of a sign may have found it difficult to choose a Court Card, since conceivably they could have two (depending on the dates given in different books!). However, here any person who was born on a cusp could easily be classified as a specific Court Card. The following table shows the time of the year governing each card (although you will notice the Pages are once again missing!).

<i>Time of the Year</i>	<i>Decans</i>	<i>Court Cards</i>
March 11–April 9	20° Pisces–20° Aries	Queen of Wands
April 10–May 10	20° Aries–20° Taurus	King of Pentacles
May 11–June 10	20° Taurus–20° Gemini	Knight of Swords
June 11–July 12	20° Gemini–20° Cancer	Queen of Cups
July 13–August 12	20° Cancer–20° Leo	King of Wands
August 13–September 12	20° Leo–20° Virgo	Knight of Pentacles
September 13–October 13	20° Virgo–20° Libra	Queen of Swords
October 14–November 12	20° Libra–20° Scorpio	King of Cups
November 13–December 11	20° Scorpio–20° Sagittarius	Knight of Wands
December 12–January 10	20° Sagittarius–20° Capricorn	Queen of Pentacles
January 11–February 8	20° Capricorn–20° Aquarius	King of Swords
February 9–March 10	20° Aquarius–20° Pisces	Knight of Cups

A longer study of the astrological signs, and in particular how the energies of one sign might mix with those of the next to produce each set of three decans, would be useful for anybody wishing to pursue an astrological study of the Tarot further.

Using Signifiers

A traditional (yet optional) practice for readings is to choose a card that signifies or represents the querent in the reading, called a significator. For those who use it, this significator acts as a central focus for the reading, drawing the energies of the reader and querent to a central point. Although a significator could be any of the seventy-eight cards in the pack, most people choose Court Cards because they are in the habit of viewing them as people.

There are many ways to choose a significator for somebody. For some, the preferred method is to allocate one based on the above astrological systems: find out the querent's birth date and allocate one from that. You might also like to try using a different system from the previous chapter—why not find out what MBTI type the querent is, for instance?

Another method is to let the cards tell you! Simply shuffle the pack and then let the querent (or yourself, if you are doing a reading for yourself) choose a card at random. This method not only gives you a significator but can also form part of the initial stages of interpretation, as it might tell you about the current mental or emotional state of the querent, their personality, or their current attitude, approach, and perspective to the situation being read about. With this you also have the added bonus of being able to pull a significator that represents the querent in the situation being read about, since people tend to have a number of aspects to their personality.

Many people feel drawn to a particular card when they first start learning Tarot. They may feel that it represents them on their deepest level, and their relationship with that card will develop over time and give them a more personal interpretation of it. Many readers choose such a card as their significator, since they feel it is such a large part of their personality. This is particularly true of the Major Arcana Cards, since they evoke strong feelings in everybody.

EXERCISE 14.8

Choose a significator for yourself. Use any method you like, even if it involves going through the pack and pulling a card you feel drawn to

without knowing its meaning. Write in your Tarot journal which card you have picked and why; or, if the card was randomly chosen from the pack, why you think it came to you. If you have picked your significator through choice and appeal, try comparing this to the significator you get when you use the astrological or MBTI systems. Is there a difference? Which system works best for you?

Usually a significator plays a minor role in a reading, being placed at the center of the spread so that it can be referred back to later. However, choosing a significator gives you a chance to develop a more intimate, personal relationship with at least one card-and from one card, others will follow. When you are able to see each card of the pack as representing a different aspect of your life, feelings, self, or experiences, you will learn each card with more than just book-reading.

Optional Homework

- Once you have identified/chosen a significator for yourself, try the same process with friends and family members. This will enable you to link the cards to your own life, making them visceral and real rather than just pieces of text in a book.
- Expand the chart for the decan associations of the Court Cards by researching each zodiac sign. Each Court Card rules the last ten degrees of one sign and the first twenty degrees of the next-how do these two signs relate to each other? For instance, how does the smaller part of Taurus influence the larger part of Gemini, and how does this relate to the Knight of Swords?

IS

COURT CARDS:
WANDS AND SWORDS

We complete our tour of the Court Cards with the two "masculine" and active suits-Wands and Swords-and with a closer examination of the Court Cards in relation to our personal lives and inner selves. This lesson aims to show that these sixteen cards can become powerful focal points for magic, affirmations, and self-development-just as much as the Major Arcana.

The Swords Court

Since the suit of Swords is attributed to the element of Air (or sometimes Fire-if you wish to use an elemental system to get interpretations for the cards, and choose Swords to be Fire, you may wish to disregard the meanings given here and write your own), the Court Cards within it show us varying degrees and ways we can engage with our mental and communicative capacities.

Page of Swords: Earth of Air/Fixation of the Volatile, Materialization of Ideas/INTP/Architect

As the earthy part of Air, the Page of Swords represents the formation of ideas into a coherent plan or a physical reality. Whereas the Page of Cups materializes creative projects, the Page of Swords realizes inventions and thought processes into something concrete. This is the organizational capacity of the mind too, and the ability to give order to unformed thoughts. Give the Page of Swords a description of the house you want to build, and he'll start drawing up blueprints; express a wish for something and he'll immediately start designing it in his head, analyzing how it might be put together and work. However, this card also expresses the ability to still the mind, focus it on the physical reality, and direct it toward a material goal. This can manifest in revision for exams, writing on a deadline, completing written assignments for work, etc. Since Earth is also a fertile element, the Page of Swords can represent the beginning of new ideas and intellectual projects. It also advises brainstorming, careful planning, and a little rebellious thought to get to a final solution.

As a person the Page of Swords is the eternal inventor, always imagining new gadgets and gizmos, political and social states, or methods of

progressing. They have excellent organizational skills, keen to take the reins in a group that needs some stability to its plans. You want a road trip? The Page of Swords will rent the car, draw up the destination plan complete with rest breaks and fuel stops, and make sure everybody is at the right place at the right time. This card also thinks outside the box, and often has moments of true genius.

Knight of Swords: Air of Air/Pure Air, Flexible and Penetrating/ENTP/Inventor

As the airy part of Air, the Knight of Swords represents the keen and penetrating mind; however, while this card gives us plenty of brilliant ideas (like the Page of Swords, verging on genius), he lacks the ability to focus or to bring them into being. The Knight of Swords is the unfocused, random mind with a short attention span, preferring to move quickly on to a new idea before the current one gets old and boring. This card advises us to keep our minds and ideas fresh, new, and exciting, getting as much experience and information as possible from many different areas of thought. This will limit depth of knowledge, but for the purposes of some projects this is not necessarily a setback. The Knight of Swords enjoys questing for knowledge, but moves onward far too quickly, showing that he values the quest itself more than the eventual end. To many he is the jack of all trades (yet master of none), knowing a little about everything-just enough to give him a strong opinion on most matters, but not enough for this opinion to stand under a little criticism. In a reading, this card often indicates quarrels and conflicts, and the act of rushing in without thinking very much. It can also represent mischief or a quest for knowledge.

A Knight of Swords person loves to hear himself talk, constantly communicating with others and bragging. He may also be impatient, rebellious toward authority, and eager to cause trouble. He dislikes being given orders by authority, and will refuse to carry them out-even if it is something he would have done under his own steam before! He can also be arrogant and audacious, yet quick-witted; with a keen mind. At his best, he can be a rebel fighter for the cause of justice and the oppressed, but at his worst, his strong opinions can lead to fundamentalism.

Queen of Swords: Water of Air/Airs Power of Transmission/INTJ/ Mastermind

Since Water represents channels and flow (and water flows down toward the river mouth), the Watery part of Air brings us the mind's power of communicating itself to others. It is also the mind's elasticity and flowing freedom, and thus the Queen of Swords is the freedom to think and express oneself and one's ideas. This card also represents the ability to bring forth in others the capacity for new ideas, clear thought, and intellectual understanding, and nurture their philosophies and outlooks. The Queen of Swords represents oratory, planting the seeds of ideas in others' minds with a few simple words or an inspirational speech. It also signifies the ability to give clarity to one's own thoughts and those of others, using communication and truth to remove and cut away falsehood or delusion. The Queen of Swords advises us to clear our thoughts, communicate honestly with others, and allow ourselves to speak truth-even if that truth is cold or cruel. It also represents the nurturing of our own ideas and thoughts, and as such this card advises us to read widely and learn as much as possible in order to grow and develop intellectually.

As a person, the Queen of Swords is coolly confident, able to remain calm in most (if not all) situations. She is an excellent public speaker and communicator, excelling in careers and situations that require communication skills. This person also enjoys teaching others, and has a way of talking that inspires people and changes their understanding significantly. However, put to the wrong use, this can lead to spin-doctoring and propaganda. The Queen of Swords also refuses to back down from an argument if provoked, and will be a bitter opponent in any verbal or intellectual conflict; she can be cruel without realizing it, her words hurting if she speaks without thinking. She never speaks falsely, but the truth can be more painful than lies. She is rarely merciful, and sometimes lacks compassion and warmth because her mind is so focused on conveying the truth.

King of Swords: Fire of Air/Rushing Forth of Wind, StormsI ENTJ I Field Marshal

The King of Swords is the fiery part of Air, the powerful thrust of the mind towards a goal or enemy, and the application and mastery of the mind at its most powerful. The rushing forth of wind and storms is often terrifying, their sheer power wreaking havoc and destruction. Yet, if properly harnessed they can provide energy (such as wind farms). This card often indicates competition, leaders of conflicts, and a powerful thinker who considers all aspects before acting upon something. When action is taken, it is swift, unrelenting, and unstoppable. The slow build-up of the storm peaks and becomes a force of nature that is impossible to block. The King of Swords, therefore, advises careful consideration in all matters before action is taken, but also reminds us that abstract thinking does not win the day. Action must be taken, and in order to be successful that action must be fueled by solid thinking and reasoning. It advises careful strategy, and if necessary a ruthless plan of attack.

As a person, the King of Swords is a merciless, cold strategist with a one-track mind set on his goal. He does not set out to win any popularity contests, but instead sets out to win battles of all kinds, using anything he can to his advantage. He is often aloof, cruel, and harsh-but also a fair and just authority-not acting rashly, assessing all situations carefully, and acting swiftly when completely informed. The King of Swords may not have the best reputation when it comes to friendship, and he is not a nice person-but he gets the job done. In a reading he is often a boss, authority figure, or bureaucrat, and thus can also signify an obstacle in the querent's life.

EXERCISE 15.1

Using the above descriptions (or any other meanings you have created yourself so far) try to link each of the Swords Court Cards to a person you know-either in real life, or a character from film and literature.

EXERCISE 15.2

Imagine you are interacting with the Swords Court across a boardroom table, trying to come up with some new ideas or advertising campaigns for a company. How does each member of this Court react and interact

with you and each other? What role do they take in the discussion? How do they express themselves?

EXERCISE 15.3

The above descriptions give a lot of positive attributes of the cards. What negative attributes do you think each of the Swords Court Cards has? Or conversely, where negative attributes are given, how do you think these could become positive? Remember these or write them in your Tarot journal.

The Wands Court

The suit of Wands governs matters of energy, the self, sexuality, the ego, and creative projects. Often it can represent the action taken to make things happen or bring projects to completion. The Wands Court can be seen as the various stages of self-understanding and development, as well as approaches to energy, sexuality, and the ego.

Page of Wands: Earth of Fire/Fuel of Fire/INFP/Healer

As the fuel of the suit of Wands and all it represents, the Page of Wands is the dynamic creative spark that drives forward a project or pursuit. It is, however, still raw and untapped, and thus difficult to control. It may come into our lives in the form of a story idea that is unfinished and rudimentary, a flash of inspiration for a poem, the image in your mind's eye of a finished project with little or no idea how to get there! As the first sparks, the Page of Wands represents all the excitement and enthusiasm that comes along with new ideas and projects, as well as the raw power and energy needed to kick-start something new. However, sometimes the Page of Wands can indicate that although the enthusiasm and raw energy is present, it is undirected and therefore can be dissipated quickly before it gets the chance to form into something material. It can also represent the awakening of an understanding of the self, the ego, or one's own passions and sexual self. It advises us to become aware of ourselves as individuals, our passions, and our desires; it also advises us to learn to harness and direct our energies and

enthusiasms toward something rather than just letting them control us or enjoying them without use.

As a person the Page of Wands has a firecracker personality, enthusiastic, optimistic, energetic, and bold, yet often so much that they cause trouble and start metaphorical fires! They start a number of new projects or paths, and drop them when their energy runs out or they have to put in hard work—they sometimes don't understand how only energy and enthusiasm won't complete the task. While the Page of Wands has many great ideas, they rarely manifest them. They are also childlike (or, negatively, childish) and eager to try new things, but can also throw temper tantrums if they don't get their own way. They enjoy playing jokes on people, and are fun-loving, but often at the expense of others who get burned by the unbridled energy from this person.

Knight of Wands: Air of Fire/Expanding and Volatizing of Fire/ENFP/Champion

Here is the quest for thrills, the seeking of adventure and danger, and the desire to prove oneself, experiment, and gain new experiences. The Knight of Wands searches for these things not as ends in themselves but instead to get his latest buzz. This card represents fun, trying new things at least once (and some things more than once!) and experimentation, particularly with aspects of the self, outward expression of personality, and sexuality. Many teenagers will experience the Knight of Wands intimately, knowing him as their own need to explore their sexuality, personality, and personal expression through various means. This card grabs life by the horns, taking every opportunity that comes one's way—regardless of whether it seems like a good idea or not! If the opportunity offers excitement and fun, the Knight of Wands advises you to take it, even if it is a little dangerous. Negatively, however, this card's thrill-seeking approach to life makes it prone to being led down a dangerous pathluckily, a Knight of Wands person rarely has enough attention to remain on that path for long!

As a person the Knight of Wands is eager to try anything new, a thrill-seeker and adventurer. The best way to get him to do something is to tell

him he can't or to dare him to. Extremely sociable, the Knight of Wands can be the life and soul of a party or he can become a braggart, although his confidence shines through and he is more often than not an exciting companion who will keep everybody on their toes. He loves telling stories (about himself), and enjoys sex of all kinds, though is often lax in matters of protection and rational thought! The Knight of Wands rushes into a thing before realizing it could be harmful, and once he does realize, he carries on out of arrogance or a desire for adventure.

Queen of Wands: Water of Fire/Fluidity and Color of Fire/INFJ/Counselor

The watery part of Fire is the flowing, sensuous part of the suit of Wands and all it represents. It is the nurturing of the self, the ego, and the passions, as well as a channel through which these things can be expressed and developed. This is the part of the self that knows how to appeal to others, how to face social groups, how to manipulate them into loving us, and which mask to wear at any given event. The Queen of Wands often falls in a reading when the querent has issues or questions about their physical or social appearance and interactions, and it often advises that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and can be expressed through means other than appearance. The force of one's personality (charisma) should shine through and speak for itself, more so than a new hairdo or manicure. The Queen of Wands also represents channels through which sexuality can be expressed: the act of sex itself, artistic renderings of beauty, aesthetic appreciation of the body, and the body's movements in dance (which often mimic the act of sex). It advises the querent to enjoy life as if it were a party, love and laugh often, and be open and free with one's personality, joy, and passion. It also counsels us to come out of our shells, take an active role in social interaction, become warmer and more sociable, and learn to make the most of our best traits.

As a person, the Queen of Wands is charismatic, beautiful (though not necessarily physically), sensual, and sexual. She is warm, often playing the hostess or the desirable coquette. She enjoys social encounters, particularly parties and dancing, and is quite the social butterfly. At times she can become hedonistic, however, and intimidating to those who are shy or

nervous. But at her best, she knows how to bring people out of their shells and inspire passions of many kinds within them. Vivacious and confident, she is a joy to behold, and her presence makes life that little bit brighter.

King of Wands: Fire of Fire/Lightning Flash/ENFJ/Teacher

The brightest star in the cosmos, the flash of an explosion, and the glorious lightning flash racing across the sky: the King of Wands is the finest example of charisma, joy, passion, sexuality, and arrogance you will ever meet. Admired by many, his exploits are both daring and self-aggrandising, and he is hated by many as well. But whether he is loved or despised, he is always respected. His social skills are incomparable, his mastery and understanding of his self and sexual prowess unparalleled, but he-like the Knight of Wands-enjoys danger for its own sake. He is a master charlatan, eager to be many things in his life without the necessary requirements of dedication. This is not to say he is a jack of all trades, however, for his propensity for mastering new skills and projects is brilliant, and indeed he excels at anything he attempts. The King of Wands often represents egoism, arrogance, pride, individualism, overconfidence, and narcissism. However, the King of Wands is alluring and intense; he advises the querent to live passionately and wholeheartedly, act freely, and take pride in whatever they do. The card also advises that admitting ignorance or inexperience at this time would be unwise, and that the querent is more than capable of facing any situation thrown at them. It may be time for the querent to be a little more selfish or confident in their own abilities.

As a person, you can't help but fall in love with the King of Wands. Charismatic, confident, active, and powerful, he oozes passion and sexuality. His energy is directed wholeheartedly into everything, although this can sometimes lead to burnout. His will is indomitable, his appetite for life never lacking and never satisfied.

EXERCISE 15.4

Using the above descriptions (or any other meanings you have created yourself so far), try to link each of the Wands Court Cards to a person

you know-either in real life, or a character from film and literature.

EXERCISE 15.5

Imagine you are in a bar or club with the Wands Court. What are they doing? How are they interacting with everybody and each other? What are they wearing? How do you feel about them?

EXERCISE 15.6

The above descriptions give a lot of positive attributes of the cards. What negative attributes do you think each of the Wands Court Cards has? Or conversely, where negative attributes are given, how do you think these could become positive? Remember these or write them in your Tarot journal.

Your Personal Tarot Court

The descriptions and previous explanations of the Court Cards have demonstrated that these cards often indicate kinds of people or aspects of somebody's personality, as well as ways of approaching a situation. Using this knowledge, you can begin to develop your own "Personal Tarot Court," viewing each card as a part of our lifestyle, approach, philosophy, and personality. Where you have problems in a particular area of life, we can find out which Court Card that area of life relates to and work with it to develop a closer understanding of yourselves. From this, you can create affirmations, rituals, and vision boards to create a persona you wish to cultivate in a given situation, or a role you wish to move into. The following exercises are merely suggestions, and you should feel free to adapt this information for your own purposes or to better express your experiences of each Court Card and suit.

EXERCISE 15.7

In your Tarot journal, answer the following questions about the Cups Court, which represents emotions and our emotional selves.

Page of Cups: The seat of your emotions. Ask yourself where the seat of your emotions is located in your life. What part of your lifestyle do you attach the most emotion to? How do you manifest your emotions?

Knight of Cups: The action of your emotions. How do you outwardly express your emotions? What use do you put them to? What are you searching for emotionally?

Queen of Cups: The nurturing of your emotions. How do you nurture and accept your emotional self? Do you find channeling your emotions difficult, or do you find it easy to express them?

King of Cups: Your emotional strengths. What are your best emotional qualities? What are the peak and strength of your emotional connections with other people?

EXERCISE 15.8

In your Tarot journal, answer the following questions about the Coins Court, which represents our physical reality.

Page of Coins: The foundations beneath you. How do you lay down foundations or begin projects? How stable are your foundations? How do you approach new beginnings?

Knight of Coins: The application of skills. What skills and resources do you have? How do you extend your skills and talents into your life and the lives of others? Do you enjoy hard work or do you hide from it?

Queen of Coins: The nurturing of your physical life. How do you approach your diet and health? Is your environment a nurturing and healthy one for your body?

King of Coins: The governing of the physical world. How do you rule your life and organize it? How do you rule your everyday activities? Are you a master of your environment? Are you in control of your daily life?

* EXERCISE 15.9

In your Tarot journal, answer the following questions about the Swords Court, which represents our intellectual, mental, and communicative capacity.

Page of Swords: The seat of new ideas. Where do you find your ideas? From whom or what do you learn? How do you manifest your ideas into reality?

Knight of Swords: The pursuit of knowledge. Where do you look for knowledge? Are you able to apply your mind to gaining knowledge? Do you think your mind is sharp? How do you engage with your intellect?

Queen of Swords: The communication of knowledge. Are you a good communicator? What do you have to say? What can you teach others? How do you express your thoughts and ideas to others?

King of Swords: The action coming from knowledge. Do you take action on your thoughts and ideas? How do your mind and intellectual understanding influence your actions? Do you think before acting? How do you plan and strategize?

* EXERCISE 15.10

In your Tarot journal, answer the following questions about the Wands Court, which represents our energy levels, passions, ego, sense of self, and sexuality.

Page of Wands: The foundation of the self. What is your sense of self or self-perception founded upon? How do you judge your self-worth? How enthusiastic and energetic are you? What inspires you?

Knight of Wands: The direction of energy. Where do you put most of your energy? What makes you passionate? What part of yourself do you wish to develop and seek a closer understanding of?

Queen of Wands: The nurturing of the passions. How do you nurture your passions? How do you channel and express to others your self and ego? How do you share your passions with others? How do you engage with your sexual self?

King of Wands: The mastery of the self. Are you in control of your passions, urges, and ego? How do these things serve you? In what ways could you gain control of yourself?

From these questions, you can create affirmations. For instance, if you have a job interview coming up and are worried about being able to express your ideas to the interviewer without being nervous or forgetting something, you could look at the Queen of Swords and your answers to the questions for that card, and create an affirmation for repetition and meditation in the days before the interview: "I am a cool, confident communicator." "I express my ideas clearly and efficiently."

An affirmation must be positive, empowering the speaker to take action and effect change within themselves and around them. Affirmations never use negative language. An example of a bad affirmation would be, "I am not scared." This uses the negative affirmation and focuses the mind on the state of being scared. The subconscious is also notorious for missing the "not," which translates the affirmation into "I am scared"! A better affirmation would be, "I am courageous and brave," or "I face challenges head on and overcome them." Affirmations work best when formulated in the present tense: you must imagine that you are what you need to be now, not tomorrow or next year. "I will be a good communicator" puts the desired state into the future, taking it away from your current self. Since we can only ever be our current selves, such an affirmation is useless. "I am a good communicator" is better.

* EXERCISE 15.II

Try creating some affirmations for each of the Court Cards, using not only the previous descriptions but also the answers to the questions from the exercises.

When you are aware of how these affirmations can be created, and the aspects of your life the Court Cards relate to, you can use them for personal development work of all kinds. The possibilities are endless!

Court Card Vision Boards

A fun and rewarding exercise for learning about the Court Cards and yourself is to create a "Vision Board" for one or all of them. As with the exercises above, you can choose to focus on a single Court Card that you feel either expresses you the most or that you feel relates to a part of your life you would like to improve. For instance, if you felt that you were lacking creative inspiration, you might wish to create an affirmation for the Page of Cups, and ask yourself what inspires you. You could then create a "vision" of yourself as you wish to be, using the image of the Page of Cups as a starting point. Begin by brainstorming some words that represent your vision for yourself, as well as any symbols or colors you feel express it. Now, using any artistic medium you choose-most people find collage is the best medium for this-create an image or poster with this expressed in visual form. You can have a copy of the Court Card you chose in the center of the image if you wish, to act as a focal point, and it's good to have some of the associated affirmations written on the finished product. Put into the image all the pictures, words, snippets of poetry, etc., that you can find that speak to you of the vision you are creating.

When you are finished, you will have a vision board. Put it up where you can see it every day or in the place that relates to your vision (office, study, bedroom, near a mirror, by your computer), and look at it often. Whenever you have need of that vision of yourself, recall in your mind the image you have created, and go over the associated affirmations in your head or out loud.

This exercise is not only one of self-development: you can also use it to deepen your understanding of the Court Cards themselves, and eventually you can create all sixteen cards as vision boards. By expressing the card meanings as you see them, you are forcing yourself to think about them, put them into a symbolic language you understand, and put them onto

something concrete. This is an excellent method of learning. And who knows, one day you may have the beginnings of your own Tarot deck.

The "Where Am I?" Spread

Remove the Court Cards from the rest of your Tarot deck and set the others aside. Split these sixteen cards into four piles according to their suit. You should have a pile of Coins, Cups, Wands, and Swords. Shuffle each pile separately and draw one card from each.

Coins: Where you are with your physical life and material reality

Cups: Where you are as an emotional being

Swords: Where you are as an intellectual, thinking being

Wands: Where you are with your spiritual life or self-awareness

You can also perform this spread from a different perspective:

Coins: What attitude you need to take to your current physical reality and everyday life

Cups: What attitude you need to take to your emotional and social situations

Swords: What attitude you need to take to your intellect and communication

Wands: What attitude you need to take to your passions and energy levels

Optional Homework

- Create at least one vision board for a Court Card of your choice.
- Perform the "Where Am I?" spread for yourself and/or others. When you have drawn all the cards, go back over the various systems for the

Court Cards and descriptions and take note of what they say. Do you feel this is accurate for you?

- If you really want to come to grips with these cards, it is important that you take a look at your own deck's Courts, specifically looking at the images, colors, and symbols in each card. What poses are the Court Card characters in? What are they doing? What are they surrounded by? What environments are they in? What are they wearing? Go through each of the Court Cards in your deck and note down meanings you get from the images.

I6

THE MINOR ARCANA: INTRODUCTION AND COINS/EARTH

Making up the largest contingent of the Tarot pack, the forty numbered cards of each suit run from Ace to ten, for example, Eight of Wands. They are called "Minor Arcana" or "little secrets," and they express everyday situations, feelings, obstacles, and experiences. Many people view the Minor Arcana cards as mundane in comparison to the abstract, spiritual

Major Arcana, and therefore view them as less important. However, as we all know, the physical world and our everyday lives play such a large role in even the most abstract of spiritual developments, and one without the other removes the purpose of either. Try not to think of the Minor Arcana as simple or lesser cards than those we have studied so far. You may find as you go through them that you remember some Minor Arcana meanings very quickly and others just don't seem to stick in your mind: this is likely due to your own experiences informing your receiving of information. For instance, if you have experienced a friendship like that of the Two of Cups, you are more likely to remember what it means and interpret it easily in a reading.

There are two different kinds of Minor Arcana that a deck can have: Pips and illustrated Minors. The Pip Minors are little different from a standard playing deck in arrangement, bearing only the number of the symbols of that suit upon it (like five swords). The illustrated Minors bear full images of people undertaking activities-the Five of Swords in this case might depict men fighting for five swords. Which style you choose is a personal preference, but you will find it easier to learn the card meanings if you have images in front of you to jog your memory and inspire interpretation. However, if you feel the Pip cards are for you, there are some books available that look at the meanings of the Marseilles deck-a traditional historical deck from which the Pip tradition comes.

You can approach the Minor Arcana in various ways using different systems (much like the systems for the Court Cards). These systems are all optional, but you might find that learning about them (even if you don't learn them well) aids you in remembering some of the card meanings or perhaps suddenly for even a single reading that system seems to work. During this lesson, we will look at the Minor Arcana using Numerology and Kabbalah, but you may find that the meanings you get using these systems are slightly different from those given for the cards themselves. Your preference, as always, is paramount. In the next lesson we will explore further the difference between Thoth-inspired and Rider-Waite-inspired meanings for the Minor Arcana.

Names of Suits

I have been using the titles of Cups, Coins, Wands and Swords throughout these lessons because they are some of the more commonly used titles. However, you may have noticed that the suit names are different in your deck. This is fine, and merely shows the individuality of deck creators around the world. Everybody will have preferences for what they call the suits, and you may find that, like me, your main reading deck has suit titles different to what you call them when you are doing a reading and speaking about them (my main reading decks use "Pentacles" instead of "Coins," for instance). There are a number of different titles for each suit, including:

Coins: Pentacles, Disks, Stars, Diamonds, Acorns, Earth

Cups: Chalice, Chalices, Grails, Heart, Bells, Water

Wands: Staves, Rods, Staffs, Sticks, Clubs, Fire

Swords: Knives, Daggers, Spades, Air

Many themed decks will rename the suits to better fit that theme, and thus in one Tarot deck (the Halloween Tarot), the suits are Ghosts, Pumpkins, Bats, and Imps! It is worth considering the names of each suit and what they symbolize to you, since that can act as a clue to the concerns and nature of that suit.

The Four Worlds and the Minor Arcana

Many fourfold systems of organizing the universe have been attributed to the four suits of the Tarot: we have already been using that of the four elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. However, it is useful to be aware of others, since they add to our understanding, and in particular one system (that of Kabbalah) can form the basis for the meanings we choose to use for the cards.

Based on a modern esoteric understanding of the four elements we can link the suits to an area of human experience and everyday life.

Wands: The self, ego, sexuality, creative endeavors and energy

Coins: The physical, body, money, and daily life

Swords: The mind, intellectual and communication

Cups: The heart and soul, emotions, social relationships, and spirituality

In Kabbalah, the Jewish system of mysticism that for many centuries has been used and studied by students of the Western Mystery Tradition (which the Tarot also played a part in), the universe is organized into a diagram called the Tree of Life. This tree is split into four "worlds" that relate to different stages of manifestation—beginning at the most unmanifest divine spark and ending with spirit in matter. These four worlds are linked to the suits of the Tarot thus:

Wands: Atziluth, Fire; the world of emanations, archetypal world

Cups: Briah, Water; the world of creation, intuitive world

Swords: Yetzirah, Air; the world of forms and ideas, intellectual world

Coins: Assiah, Earth; the world of action, physical world

Using this system, we could view the suits not only as separate entities, but as continuations of each other, beginning with the initial creative force and energy in Wands, which finds form in the womblike creative urge of the Cups suit to bring something into being. The suit of Swords represents the intellectual understanding of the process and the process of formation itself, and finally the suit of Coins shows the action that comes from this, and the material reality. The four worlds associated with the suits also invite us to think of each number of the Minor Arcana as the same concept but on a different level: for instance, all the Aces can be considered the seeds of the suit, but planted in different worlds. We explore this idea further in the following section.

Kabbalah and the Minor Arcana

The Tree of Life (see Appendix 2: The Tree of Life) bears ten spheres (sephiroth), each of them corresponding to a manifestation of the Divine, for example Binah, the Great Mother; Chesed, the power of Mercy; and Tiphereth, the solar power of harmony. Each of these ten sephiroth is attributed to the Minor Arcana from Ace to ten: all the Aces correspond to Kether, the first sephiroth, and all the Fives to Geburah, for instance. These sephiroth bear their own associations.

1. Kether, meaning "Crown": the first emanation of spirit; Divine spark, unity, the highest.
2. Chockmah, meaning "Wisdom": the "masculine" principle involved in creation; it takes the raw energy from Kether and expands it. Drawing a point from 1 to 2 we get a line, so Chockmah is a reflection of Kether's unity: the divine creative word.
 3. Binah, meaning "Understanding": the "feminine" principle of creation; it gives form to the creative word and brings it to manifestation.
 4. Chesed, meaning "Mercy": the love that unites. From it come all spiritual virtues.
 5. Geburah, meaning "Strength": the energy that creates, the will of the universe acting through natural laws.
 6. Tiphereth, meaning "Beauty": the harmony and fulcrum of the universe and its forces, it mediates the divine emanation from the other sephiroth.
 7. Netzach, meaning "Victory": the emotions, intuition, and reflection. It perceives and receives with a sense other than intelligence.
 8. Hod, meaning "Splendor": the intellect, giving meaning to thought through language.

9. Yesod, meaning "Foundation": the purifier of the emanations and connects the energy of the other sephiroth to the lowest sphere.

10. Malkuth, meaning "Kingdom": the physical world, stability.

In Kabbalistic Tarot, all the Aces correspond to Kerber, all the Twos to Chockmah, all the Threes to Binah, and so on. Thus each card of the same number has something in common with its fellows. We can use this to gain Minor Arcana meanings by uniting the qualities to the sephiroth with those of the four elements or the four worlds of the Tree of Life. For instance, the Six of Cups would be Tiphereth in Water or Tiphereth in Briah: a harmonizing of the emotions, and a mediator for the intuitive forces of creation.

In many Golden Dawn decks, you will find that the Minor Arcana Cards bear titles as well as suits and numbers: these titles are given to reflect the Kabbalistic correspondences of each card. If you want to use a Golden Dawn deck or a Thothbased deck, I highly recommend you study the Kabbalistic Tarot thoroughly so that you can understand why the Minors have certain meanings. Be aware, however, that some of these meanings differ from the Rider-Waite-based decks that don't work with the Kabbalistic system.

EXERCISE 16.1

Using the Kabbalistic associations for the elements, the four worlds, and the sephiroth, write down what you think the following Minor Arcana Cards could mean:

- Ace of Wands (Kerber in Fire/Atziluth)
- Three of Coins (Binah in Earth/Assiah)
- Six of Swords (Tiphereth in Air/Yetzirah)
- Nine of Cups (Yesod in Water/Briah)

- Ten of Coins (Malkuth in Earth/Assiah)
- Two of Wands (Chockmah in Fire/Atziluth)
- Five of Swords (Geburah in Air/Yetzirah)

Due to the consecutive nature of the sephiroth, the Minor Arcana in this system can be viewed as beginning at the Aces of each suit with a single, united seed or raw spark of the element and progressively expanding and dividing into more manifest forms of their suit.

Kabbalah and the Major Arcana

The Major Arcana also has Kabbalistic symbolism: the ten sephiroth on the Tree of Life are linked to each other by twenty-two pathways (see Appendix 2: The Tree of Life). Each of these pathways corresponds to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet that bears its own meanings; these pathways also show the equilibrium of two sephiroth. Given that there are twenty-two Major Arcana cards, it is not surprising that these two systems have been joined together. A large number of modern decks take inspiration from the Kabbalistic associations of the Major Arcana, in particular the Thoth and Golden Dawn-based decks (which is why you will often see Hebrew letters on the cards). While a study of the Kabbalistic associations of the Major Arcana is worthwhile and highly recommended, there is no room here to give enough time and space to it; brief descriptions would only serve to complicate a beautiful system, since its power is in its finer detail. I have therefore only mentioned it here so that you have a concept of the Kabbalistic Tarot as a coherent whole.

However, while the Kabbalistic associations of the Tarot are useful for understanding the Tarot as a spiritual and magical tool, they are not necessary if you wish to use the cards for divination, fortune-telling, games, or results magic.

* EXERCISE 16.2

If you are interested in the Kabbalistic symbolism of Tarot, check out the Further Reading list at the end of this lesson and do some research to develop your understanding. This is particularly recommended if your chosen Tarot deck is Thoth- or Golden Dawn-based. I also recommend reading more about the Major Arcana associations with the Hebrew letters, as they are complex and rewarding to study, highlighting the spiritual and magical perspective found within the cards.

Numerology and the Minor Arcana

In a similar system, Numerology is used to give meaning to the Minor Arcana. Like the ten sephiroth, the nine principal numbers and the number ten (the number of completion after the first nine) are given attributes:

1. Beginnings, unity, leadership, individuality
2. Duality, partnership, union
3. Creativity, fertility, artistry, communication, interaction
4. Manifestation, foundation, stability
5. Conflict, imbalance, testing, action
6. Harmony, love, balance, reaction, flux
7. Spirituality, awareness, dreams, consciousness, thought
8. Power, sacrifice, rewards
9. Completion, joy, success, catharsis as we move toward rebirth
10. Post-completion, the goal achieved, moving toward rebirth and a return to 1

Coupling these numerological attributes with those of the four elements, we can create some useful and easy to remember Minor Arcana meanings.

EXERCISE 16.3

Using the numerological associations given above with those of the four elements for each of the suits, write down what you think each of the following cards could mean.

- Four of Wands
- Five of Cups
- Nine of Swords
- Ten of Coins
- Two of Cups
- Eight of Wands

The Suit of Coins/Earth

The following meanings are for ease of reference only. It is highly recommended that you develop your own interpretations through experience, study, and intuition. You will find it easy to read the Minors if they have illustrations, as the images will give you clues regarding their meaning. Use these as a basis for your interpretations at first, and allow knowledge and experience to augment your intuitive response to the images as you grow in confidence.

Ace of Coins

The foundation of all material things, the seed waiting to be planted. New beginnings, new goals and material projects. From tangible foundations come tangible results, and the Ace of Coins represents these: material comforts, money, good for tune, and recognition from friends are all indicated by this card. In a reading, the Ace of Coins indicates a fruitful time ahead for the querent, where they can start putting down the foundations for any endeavors they undertake.

Two of Coins

The physical exchange of money, trade, and favors is indicated by the duality of this suit of Earth. It can also represent natural change and flux in the world around us, as well as the balance of our everyday lives and tasks—not easy for many people who have families, careers, projects, spiritual lives, and hobbies to fit into a single day! Often the card of struggling students or single parents, the Two of Coins advises us to budget carefully and walk the fine line between feast and famine.

Three of Coins

Since three is the number of creativity and interaction, the Three of Coins is the creation of material works through application of skills and understanding. The master craftsman completes his work and is praised by friends and family. It's time to put your skills and talents to good use.

Four of Coins

The most material of the numbers in the suit of Earth has both positive and negative connotations: it can be seen as the foundation of power in the physical world, a consolidation and protection of one's resources; it can, however, also become greed and selfish acts, hoarding possessions for their own sake and refusing to share with others. Sometimes this card advises the querent to save for a rainy day and be frugal.

Five of Coins

An imbalance occurs after the balance of a foundation has been formed, and in this case money and similar issues of our daily lives are suddenly wrong and moving in the wrong direction. Financial worries, monetary loss, and poor physical health are indicated by this card, as well as isolation from others due to these problems.

Six of Coins

The number of mediation ensures that the associations of the suit of Coins flow in the right direction. Success in an endeavor is indicated by this card, and rewards given for good efforts. Human morality and justice systems can also be seen here, and acts of charity and generosity are indicated. The querent is advised that their actions have very real effects and that they will receive energies and results back accordingly.

Seven of Coins

Some projects take time, patience, and a gentle touch, just as growing plants does. When the seeds have been planted, the plants must be watered regularly, tended, weeded, sometimes trimmed, protected from slugs, and finally-after many monthsthey are fully grown. The Seven of Coins reminds us that the effort we put into the present may not have results for many months or years to come, and that we should approach any situation with patience and care.

Eight of Coins

Whereas the Three of Coins is the Master Craftsman, here we have the apprentice. The learning of new skills and talents is predicted by this card, and the querent is advised to seek out new ways of putting their natural abilities to work. Perhaps it's time to seek a new profession, pick up a new language, or learn how to cook Italian? This card also speaks of learning from a teacher or master, and of being prepared to put effort into something to make it work.

Nine of Coins

When the hard work has been put into a project, you'll eventually complete it. The moment of completion is all yours, and you can enjoy it as a result of your labor. This card represents all self-made men and women, including people who set up their own businesses. Here is the querent putting in the effort on their own, without the need for anybody else, and enjoying the rewards at the end.

Ten of Coins

Our physical environment and the seat of our wealth can be found in this card: our homes, our workplaces, our immediate family. The Ten of Coins also represents inheritances, whether they are monetary or through genes, and the concept of the nuclear family. Respect for elders, tradition, and comfort are indicated, and the querent is reminded that their immediate surroundings have an effect on other parts of their life.

* QUESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

Answer the following questions in your Tarot journal.

- What is your immediate environment (or the environment you spend most of your time in) like? Is it comfortable? Does it promote a healthy body? (Ten of Coins)
- Do you know of any figures (fictional, historical, or personal acquaintances) that could be described as "self-made" or self-reliant? What have they done to become that? (Nine of Coins)
- What new skills would you like to learn, and where would they lead you? (Eight of Coins)
- What have you experienced that didn't come to fruition for a long time? How did it feel? Did you feel like it was hard work all the way through? (Seven of Coins)
- What role does morality play in your life? How do you feel society rewards and punishes? (Six of Coins)
- What can cause financial difficulties? How do worries in daily life come about? (Five of Coins)
- Do you consider yourself frugal? Greedy? Selfish? How do you save money? In what way do you consolidate your personal power? (Four of Coins)

- What projects have you completed in the material world? What great artwork have you undertaken? Do you think you will create a Magnum Opus later in life, and if so, what would it be? (Three of Coins)
- How do you plan your everyday life? Are you a careful planner, or do you always feel lost and unbalanced? What are your main priorities, and how do you juggle them? (Two of Coins)
- What do you feel is your most stable foundation at this time? (Ace of Coins)

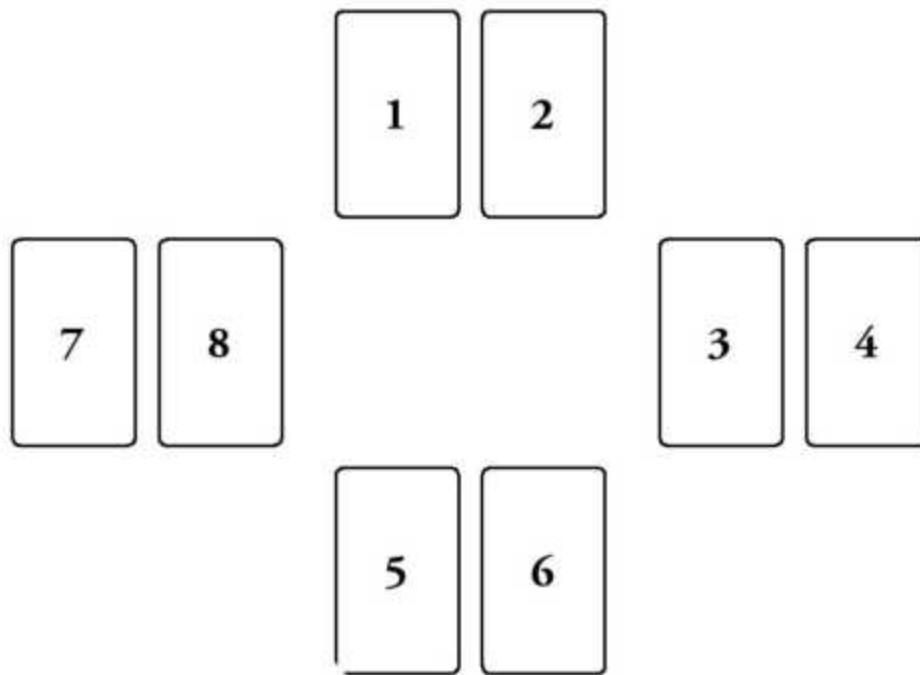
The Resources Spread

This spread highlights the resources that the querent can use-either for a specific purpose or in general life. It is inspired by the concept of the Four of Coins, in particular the Thoth deck image, which depicts four towers at each corner of a mighty fortress. The Four of Coins raises questions about how we use or abuse our resources, and where our power lies.

Card 1. Earth: What physical resources do I have at my disposal?

Card 2. How can I best use these physical resources?

Card 3. Air: What intellectual resources do I possess?



Resources Spread

Card 4. How can I best use these intellectual resources?

Card 5. Fire: What parts of my personality and self can be used to empower myself?

Card 6. How do I best use my personal resources?

Card 7. Water: What emotional resources can I call upon at this time?

Card 8. How can I best use these emotional resources?

Optional Homework

- Before moving into the next lesson, look through the Major Arcana and identify any cups or similar vessels that you can find. Note which cards they appear on and keep this with you when you do the next lesson.

- Perform the Resources spread for yourself and/or others. At this stage, you should be familiar with many of the cards: you are welcome to refer back to card meanings in this book if you are unsure, but try to let yourself find the meaning through looking at the symbolism in the cards and following your intuition. At this stage, you should also be accustomed to linking the card meanings to the question and to other cards in the spread.
- Write Tarot journal entries for at least three of the cards from the Coins suit. Don't forget to use some of the exercises from previous lessons to approach them, including Exercises 2.4 and 2.5.

Further Reading

Mystical Qabalah, by Dion Fortune, is an excellent analysis of the ten sephiroth and their many aspects.

Living the Tarot, by Amber Jayanti. Throughout the book, the author applies the Hebrew letters to each Major Arcana card, and gives a non-Kabbalistic analysis of their significance in the Tarot.

The Complete Idiots Guide to Numerology, by Kay Lagerquist and Lisa Lenard.

Numerology: Key to the Tarot, by Konrad Sandoor.

Kabbalistic Tarot: Hebraic Wisdom in the Major and Minor Arcana, by Dovid Kraf-chow, is more complex than beginner's books, but goes into great depth and is well worth the effort.

Tarot and the Tree of Life: Finding Everyday Wisdom in the Minor Arcana, by Isabel Kliegman, is an excellent Kabbalistic analysis of the Minor Arcana and Court Cards. Highly recommended and easily approachable.

17

THE MINOR ARCANA:
METHODS FOR THE
MINORS AND CUPS/WATER

In this lesson, we examine the suit of Cups, and also look at some of the methods you can use to learn the Minor Arcana, develop a deeper understanding of these "little mysteries," and interpret them intuitively in a reading.

Rider-Waite and Thoth Meanings: Some Differences

If you own a number of decks, you may have noticed that the Minor Arcana have very distinctive differences both in depiction and meaning. For instance, whereas the Seven of Cups in the Rider-Waite tradition has the image of a man dreaming of possibilities and fantastical adventures, the Thoth tradition gives the card the title "Debauch." This will only cause you problems when you are accustomed to one tradition and decide to try a deck from the other tradition-you may find your intuition confused by the differing messages coming from what you have already learned and experienced, and the images and card titles before you. The meanings used in this book are mostly Rider-Waite-based, but my own experience has also included the Thoth tradition and therefore some of the card meanings are a mix of the two where appropriate. You will find it worthwhile to study both traditions, as the more inspiration you get for the card meanings, the more easily your intuition and memory will supply you with accurate interpretations of the cards in a reading.

You can find Rider-Waite-based meanings in most introductory Tarot books, since the Rider-Waite tradition is one of the easiest to learn. See the Further Reading list at the end of this lesson for some recommendations. The Thoth tradition has some specific books that cater to it, usually studying the Thoth deck alone. Again, the Further Reading list can put you on the right track.

* EXERCISE 17.1

Read some meanings for the Minor Arcana in the Thoth-tradition from one of the books recommended. Compare these to those you have learned here and in other introductory Tarot books. Do they conflict? Are they complementary? Are they very similar? Which do you

prefer? Where they conflict or are slightly different, do you think you could find a way of mixing the two?

Interpreting the Minors-Methods of Approach

You may feel that you need to learn by heart everything in these lessons in order to interpret the cards. However, don't forget what we learned in Lesson 4 ("Intuition and the Tarot"; "Developing Your Intuition"). There are many ways that you can read the cards where they fall in a reading, and you will eventually discover which ones work best for you.

Say What You See

Sometimes the easiest method of interpretation is to say what you see in the card images. Ask yourself what each of the characters in the card is doing, how they are dressed, what their facial expressions suggest about their character, and what environment they are in. Particularly with the Minor Arcana, you will find that the intended card meanings have been expressed through very simple symbolism or imagery: for instance, generosity is expressed through the image of somebody giving coins to beggars.

Symbolism

As well as looking at the whole image, try seeking out the symbolism in the cards. Instead of seeing a sword and considering it to be a simple representation of the suit of Swords, perhaps ask yourself what that sword symbolizes. Although the stars on a card may suggest nighttime, what else can they represent symbolically? Try to view every image on the card as possibly having more than one meaning and you may discover layers of symbolism you would previously have taken for granted or missed.

Using a System

Some of the systems we have explored and will explore in the upcoming lessons provide frameworks within which you can calculate card meanings, regardless of card image or intuition. While this may seem like bad practice at first, it can also act as a useful backup for those moments when your

intuition isn't forthcoming, or the image isn't saying anything to you. You will find that you have to take a considerable amount of time to grasp some of the systems (like the Schemhamphoresch, which we will explore later), and may have to refer back to a book while you're still learning, but you will eventually remember the system and associations through practice.

Experience

One of the best ways to interpret the Minor Arcana Cards is to develop a relationship with them through experience. Your aim is to have, when you see a single card, a mindscape of associations appear in your mind's eye. When you see the Five of Coins, you will not only see the book meanings you may have learned, you will also see the systems you know, other images of the same card from different decks, that paragraph in a book you read that reminded you of the card, a film character you associated with the card, and more. All of these memories and experiences of that card serve as inspiration for your interpretation, and give you a varied and diverse understanding of it. It also allows you to bring the card's meaning into your realworld experience, causing you to remember it easily.

EXERCISE 17.2

For the following cards, use two or more of the above approaches and write down some of the interpretations that come to mind. Compare the results you get from each approach. Did one approach inspire you more? Give you greater inspiration? Seem easier? Did you get the same results or very different?

- Five of Wands
- Nine of Swords
- Ten of Cups
- Three of Swords
- Four of Wands

- Ace of Coins

Major Arcana, Court Cards, and Minor Arcana: One Big Happy Family

We should be aware that the cards in the Tarot pack are not just individual, separate entities: they have links with each other. In particular, the Minor Arcana can link to the Majors and the Courts through numerology and imagery. Every Major Arcana has a number, and these can be linked to the numbers of Minors, for instance:

- The four Aces are associated with I The Magician, X The Wheel, and XIX The Sun.
- The four Twos are associated with II The High Priestess, XI Justice, and XX Judgement.
- The four Threes are associated with III The Empress, XII The Hanged Man, XXI The World, and all the Queens.
- The four Fours are associated with IV The Emperor, XIII Death, and all the Kings.
- The four Fives are associated with V The Hierophant and XIV Temperance.
- The four Sixes are associated with VI The Lovers and XV The Devil.
- The four Sevens are associated with VII The Chariot and XVI The Tower.
- The four Eights are associated with VIII Strength and XVII The Star.
- The four Nines are associated with IX The Hermit and XVIII The Moon.
- The four Tens are associated with X The Wheel of Fortune and XIX The Sun.

There are a number of ways you can use these associations. You can view the Major Arcana Cards as an expression of the same concepts found in their corresponding Minor Arcana Cards, but on a more universal or abstract level, with the Minors bringing those concepts into an everyday context. They are also useful mnemonic techniques for jogging your memory and inspiration with the Minors during a reading: when you are already familiar with the easily readable and evocative Major Arcana Cards corresponding to them, you will remember what major themes are associated.

- Aces (Magician, Wheel, Sun): Divine spark, will, individuality, ego
- Twos (High Priestess, justice, judgement): Duality, balance, equilibrium
- Threes (Empress, Hanged Man, World): Birth, creation, receptivity
- Fours (Emperor, Death): Necessity, stability, activity
- Fives (Hierophant, Temperance): Spirit in matter, duality imbalance and rebalance
- Sixes (Lovers, Devil): Interaction, love, responsibilities
- Sevens (Chariot, Tower): Movement, advance, destruction
- Eights (Strength, Star): Victory, hope, overcoming
- Nines (Hermit, Moon): Solitary, wisdom, secrecy
- Tens (Wheel, Sun): Completion, return, cycles

EXERCISE 17.3

With the suit of Coins, which you are already familiar with, go through each card from Ace to ten and compare each one with its associated Major Arcana Cards, considering specifically some of the meanings and interpretations you already have through the Minors (either from

the book or elsewhere, such as your Tarot journal). Try also to look for shared symbols or recurring images-these may hint at important themes. Ask yourself how the Major Arcana expresses the themes on a cosmic level compared to the Minor Arcana's everyday level.

Another way of drawing links between the different cards of the Tarot pack is through shared symbolism. Regardless of number, you may find that a Minor Arcana Cards contains an image that you recall from a Major Arcana Cards. This suggests a common concept, idea, or perspective between the two cards and can lead you to similar interpretations and inspiration as above. This technique can also be used between Minor Arcana Cards, or between Minors and Courts, or Majors and Courts.

EXERCISE 17.4

Using the following symbols, one by one, go through your deck and pull out all the cards bearing that symbol. Note them down and study them, asking yourself what they share and why.

- Stars
- Moon
- Children
- Boat
- Nighttime/darkness
- Cube
- Fish

This is also a method you can use during your readings to add another level of interpretation, and allow you to see the reading as a coherent whole painting a picture, rather than individual cards commenting on a different story entirely.

The Suit of Cups/Water

The suit of Cups is associated with the element of Water, and therefore our emotional selves and ability to feel, receive, perceive, and create. It shows us as social creatures that can be affected by the actions and words of others, and as beings in a constant state of flux. This suit also asks us questions about how we channel our emotions, how we express our feelings, and how we nurture ourselves spiritually. Whereas the suit of Coins deals predominantly with external events or works, the suit of Cups focuses on our assimilation of events on an inner level.

EXERCISE 17.5

If you completed last lesson's Optional Homework, you should have gone through your deck and noted which cards bear cups or similar vessels on them. Knowing what the suit of Cups can relate to, what do you think the presence of such vessels in other cards signifies? How are the energies of the Cups suit expressed in these cards?

Ace of Cups

The image of a single cup, held aloft or glorified in a beautiful setting, brings to mind the Holy Grail, a symbol of spiritual attainment and union with God. It reminds us of the Catholic Eucharist-the cup bearing the blood of Christ-and of the experience of spiritual union with a higher power. Here is love in its highest, purest form: compassion and spiritual love. The Ace of Cups represents the realization of the love for something beyond us as the love of All, and in this realization comes utter joy, bliss, and ecstasy. In this card, the joy is so great that we may feel like vessels that cannot contain it all completely, and let it flow out into the world.

Two of Cups

If cups are sometimes a symbol of the vessel for the soul, of our emotional selves, then two cups coming together represents a joining of two hearts. This is probably not limited to a sexual union, but instead indicates a relationship between friends that is so strong it can move mountains. The

bonds of friendship are healing ones, nurturing ones, and supportive ones, and as such the Two of Cups can represent the mutual support between two people.

Three of Cups

Like the Three of Coins, the Three of Cups-numerologically speaking-relates to something manifesting. In this case, the manifestation is an emotional one that suggests the querent has a cause to celebrate a happy event in their lives. Family reunions, parties with friends, anniversaries, weddings, baby showers, and more are all represented in this card. The Three of Cups shows us the many ways in which we create ceremonies, rituals, parties, or traditions to celebrate things that give us joy. In an advisory position, this card often advises the querent to be more sociable and carefree.

Four of Cups

Four, the number of solidity, manifestation and Earth does not always react well with Water. The two elements create mud, and still water becomes stagnant. When our emotions and feelings are not allowed to flow, or become stuck on one thing, we can become disappointed, disillusioned, and despondent. In the Four of Cups, we see boredom and dissatisfaction with one's life, but we also see this in the midst of great opportunity and luxury. Sometimes we become blinded by our own stagnation so we cannot see the beauty of life around us, and sabotage our own well-being.

Five of Cups

The Fives bring imbalance to the stability of the Fours, and with imbalances come loss, despair, bitterness, and disappointment. The Five of Cups represents the grief and mourning period we feel when we lose something or somebody, whether that is a friend, loved one, state of affairs, job, or sense of self. With every stage of transition comes a loss, and therefore a customary grieving period. However the Five of Cups suggests that this period may last over-long, taking over the querent's life and mind and

blinding them to any possibility of life beyond loss. "Crying over spilled milk" is an apt phrase for this card.

Six of Cups

All the fond memories and nostalgic feelings we harbor are found in the Six of Cups. The childish pleasures, innocent dreams, and the way we were in younger days-viewed, of course, through rose-tinted glasses-can be a pleasant way of reminding ourselves of the simpler joys of life. This card represents a simple, unsullied perspective on the world like that of a curious child with eager expectations. But it can also warn us that dwelling on the past prevents us from living in the present and shaping our futures, and thus nostalgia must remain a mere pastime.

Seven of Cups

In this card, we see our wildest dreams, our most fervent fantasies and desired wishes. In the Seven of Cups, we build our castles in the air, dreaming up entire universes with our imagination. From this fecund faculty we can choose a number of possibilities for paths we might wish to pursue, and thus this card can represent the nature of possibility and the choice we must make between options. However, the nature of the imagination is such that the Seven of Cups advises us to be careful with our choice: things aren't always as they seem. Our mind is masterful at duplicitous representations, and with only a little change here or an airbrushing there you will perceive something very different from reality. Here are the smoke and the mirror.

Eight of Cups

Sometimes everything becomes just too much for us and we no longer wish to be on our current path. We drop everything, sigh deeply, and simply walk away. The Eight of Cups depicts the letting go of a part of ourselves or our lives that is no longer useful to us, and moving on to pursue more useful or interesting avenues. Often this manifests in a spiritual or emotional way: it can indicate leaving a partner, traveling to gain wisdom, or an alluring spiritual path not taken. If negative, the Eight of Cups can also represent

abandonment-particularly of an emotional nature-and a need for escape that will not address the problem.

Nine of Cups

While the Nines are all nearing completion and fulfilment, they are not quite there yet! Nevertheless, they represent the feeling you get when you can see the finish line and you're nearly there: joy, happiness, laughter. The Nine of Cups represents all kinds of fun, and particularly advises the querent to engage in life fully, laughing all the way. Laughter is, after all, the best medicine. This is the card of ending a long day, kicking back on the sofa with a glass of your favorite beverage, breathing deeply and feeling extremely happy with yourself. However, it can also represent too much of a good thing: too much relaxation can lead to failure in other areas of life; too many favorite beverages can lead to drunkenness!

Ten of Cups

Sometimes, life really is this good. Whereas the Ten of Coins represents the family given to us by birth and blood, and our immediate environment, the Ten of Cups represents the family we choose and surround ourselves with. It is sometimes said that the modern family is made up of friends rather than relatives, and certainly the Ten of Cups supports this. The complete fulfillment and happiness, stability and safety of your closest friends, and the path you choose to walk, are the fuel for your joy. The Ten of Cups is also the fabled "happy ending" that makes a simple story into a fairy tale. If the reading is about a relationship, the Ten of Cups is one of the best cards that can appear-it suggests the relationship is true, strong, based on trust, affection, love, and shared joy. Any endeavors or projects under this card are auspicious, and will lead to a happy conclusion.

* QUESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

Answer the following questions in your Tarot journal.

- How have you experienced compassion, toward others or yourself?
(Ace of Cups)

- Can you think of a person in your life who is a true friend? (Two of Cups)
- How do you act at social gatherings? Are you open and easygoing? Or do you feel nervous and closed? (Three of Cups)
- What do you do when you are bored? How do you act when you are stuck in a rut? (Four of Cups)
- What were you last disappointed with? How have you experienced grief and loss? (Five of Cups)
- What is your fondest memory? Are you often nostalgic? (Six of Cups)
- What are some of your dreams and fantasies, no matter how unrealistic? Do you think any of them could ever be achieved? (Seven of Cups)
- When you move onto something new, have you completed what you were doing first? Have you ever run away from something? Have you been on a spiritual journey or pilgrimage? (Eight of Cups)
- What was the last thing that made you laugh? What do you find funny? How do you enjoy your free time? (Nine of Cups)
- Who is your chosen family? How do they make you feel secure? (Ten of Cups)

A Relationship Spread

Issues of love, romance, and friendship are some of the most commonly examined areas of life in a Tarot reading. Our emotional lives have the ability to affect so many other parts of life, even down to our health and life expectancy, that it should come as no surprise that they also play an important role in most questions asked of a Tarot reader.

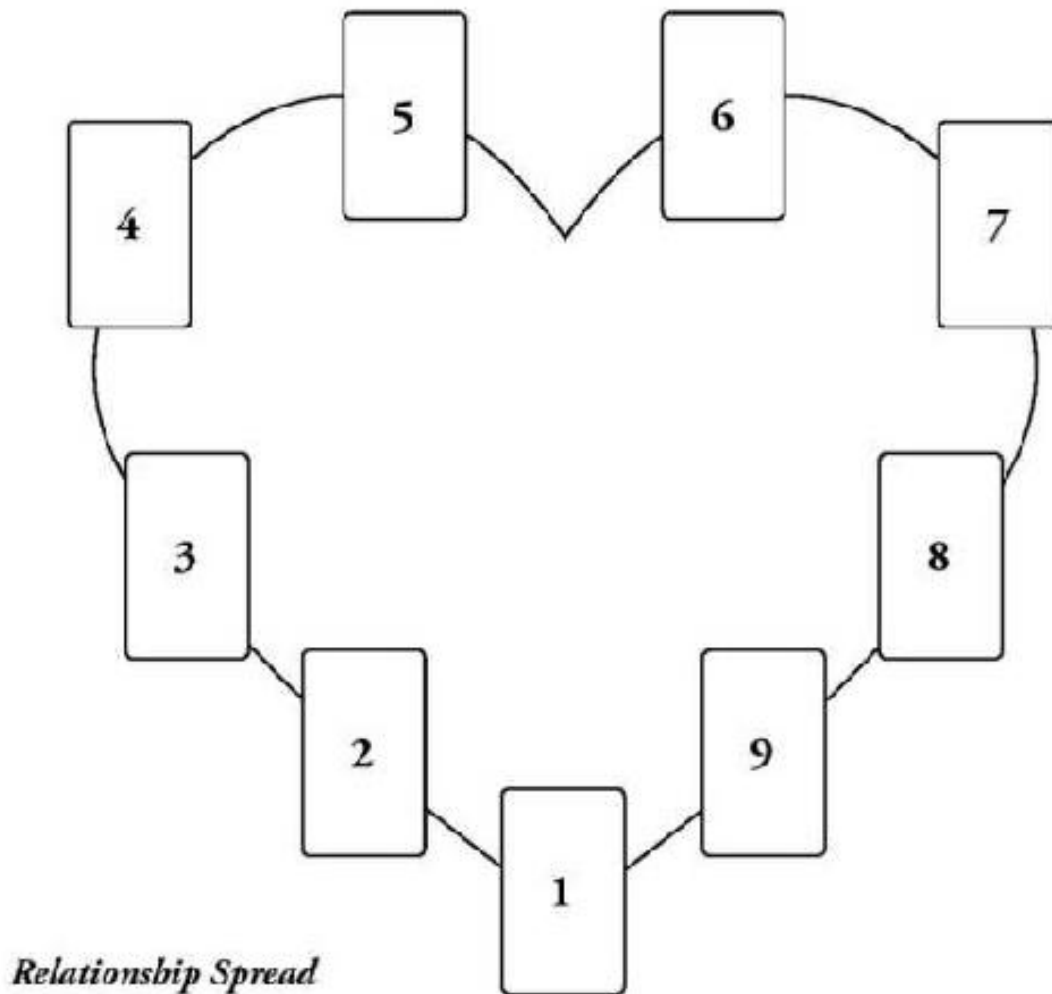
The following spread can be applied to most relationships, whether they are romantic or just platonic, and should help to assess what both people want from the relationship, how they feel, and where the relationship is going.

Card 1. The nature of the relationship in the Past

Card 2. The nature of the relationship in the Present

Card 3. What the querent needs from the relationship at this time

Card 4. What the partner needs from the relationship at this time



Card 5. What the querent brings to the relationship

Card 6. What the partner brings to the relationship

Card 7. The strengths of the relationship

Card 8. The areas that the relationship needs strengthening in

Card 9. The direction of the relationship in the Future

Optional Homework

- Choose at least three cards from the Cups suit and apply a myth, story, fairy tale, or film section/character to each of them. Particularly focus on things that you think demonstrate the meanings of the cards you have chosen, rather than choosing them simply because the imagery is similar. When you can relate the meanings to something you are already familiar with, you'll find further inspiration for interpretation.
- Perform the Relationship Spread above for yourself or a friend. If the relationship between the two people is particularly strong, you might wish to perform the spread for them together, so that you can facilitate discussion.
 - Write a Tarot journal entry for at least two of the cards from the Cups suit, using Exercises 2.4 and 2.5.

Further Reading

21 Ways to Read a Tarot Card, by Mary K. Greer, is an excellent look at the various approaches you can take to the cards, including the Minor Arcana. Aids in interpretation.

Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot, by Lon Milo DuQuette, is a great guide to the Thoth Tarot meanings, which have given rise to many other decks that have retained the same meanings. Useful for comparison between Thothbased and Rider-Waite-based decks.

The Pictorial Key to the Tarot, by Arthur Edward Waite, was written by the designer of the Rider-Waite Tarot. Useful for understanding the highly influential RiderWaite tradition of meanings, and for comparing this with the Thoth tradition.

The Underground Stream: Esoteric Tarot Revealed, by Christine Payne-Towler, is an exploration of the historical and esoteric systems associated with the Tarot. Useful for looking at different ways to approach the cards.

18

THE MINOR ARCANA: THE MIND APPLIED TO TAROT, AND SWORDS/AIR

In this lesson, we continue our study of the Minor Arcana with the suit of Swords. We'll examine one of the more complex systems of attributes for the Minor Arcana-the Schemhamaphoresch-as well as looking at some of

the academic research on the Tarot, in keeping with the theme of Swords: the mind, intellect, and communication.

Intellectual Tarot

For many people, to believe in the Tarot is to be illogical and silly. However, a great number of highly intelligent people use and study the Tarot from a variety of perspectives, and many of them apply their keen minds to the academic study of how it works, why it works, and its history and symbolism. The Tarot is not just a solid pack of cards that one learns how to use and believes in-it is also a concept that is ever-changing as new theories and research come to light. The research on it is just as exciting and cutting-edge as in any other intellectual arena, and it is good to remain up-to-date with some of it if you want to understand the Tarot from a perspective beyond simply "It works, I use it."

The Association for Tarot Studies

Website: <http://association.tarotstudies.org/>

This web-based center for Tarot research has been running since 2002, sustained and masterminded by Jean-Michel David, a foremost player in the current Tarot research climate. The website has its own newsletter that is released every month, and always features an original, insightful, and well-researched article. Previous articles have included "Notes on the Use of Indirect Suggestion in Tarot Readings," by Enrique Enriquez, "Petrarch's Triumphs and the Creation of Tarot," by Robert Mealing, and "The I-Ching and the Pip Cards of the Tarot," by Jean-Michel David. The subjects covered range from cutting-edge history to analysis of the cards and methods of reading. The newsletter is free and makes excellent reading. The website also has links to a number of Tarot resources, including forums, courses, links to organizations, and event listings.

Books

Many books on Tarot surpass the introductory stages and are aimed at more experienced readers and those with an academic interest. Such books are

useful as they develop our own ideas and make us aware of a great number of different ways of approaching the Tarot as a phenomenon or concept. Some recommended books can be found in the Further Reading at the end of this lesson.

Sources of the RiderWaite Tarot Symbols

Website: http://www.tarotpassages.com/old_moonstruck/oneill/

Collected and researched by Robert O'Neill, this website is an excellent way of finding out where the symbols in the familiar Rider-Waite Tarot pack come from. Not only are we told which older decks Waite took the inspiration for his deck from, but much of the symbolism is elucidated and explained to allow for interpretation, but with awareness of the historical context.

Dr. Robert V. O'Neill Tarot Library

Website. <http://www.tarot.com/about-tarot/library/boneill/>

Another collection of work by Robert O'Neill, this website gives thorough explanations of some of the earliest Tarot images and symbols, and uses them as a basis for interpretation. Useful for awareness of historical context, and it can also explain some of the modern card images as well. The website goes on to examine the historical development of the occult and magical Tarot, Tarot and its possible link to the Cathars, and other influences upon the Tarot's development. Extremely interesting reading.

Forums

There are some web forums that particularly focus on an intellectual understanding of the Tarot and its symbolism, particularly from a historical perspective:

- [http://forum.tarothistory.com/-Tarot history forum.](http://forum.tarothistory.com/-Tarot%20history%20forum)
- [http://www.aeclectic.net/-Has a Tarot history and iconography forum.](http://www.aeclectic.net/-Has%20a%20Tarot%20history%20and%20iconography%20forum)

- [http://www.tarotl-home.elysium.com.ar/-Tarot L's forum](http://www.tarotl-home.elysium.com.ar/-Tarot%20L's%20forum), while also including room for beginners and the practical use of the Tarot, encourages scholarly and academic approaches to the cards.

EXERCISE 18.1

If you have access to the Internet, take a look at the Sources of the Waite/ Smith Tarot Symbols website, and the Iconology sections of the Dr. Robert V. O'Neill Tarot Library. Compare the explanations of symbols on these sites to the symbols you have in your pack of cards. Does your deck have any of the symbols mentioned? Do you feel you can apply the research to these symbols in a way that improves your understanding of the cards? How does this affect your interpretation of each card?

EXERCISE 18.2

In the back of your Tarot journal, start keeping a bibliography of the books, articles, or magazines that you have read to aid you in your Tarot studies, even if they are not directly Tarot-related. For instance, if you read *Chocolat*, by Joanne Harris, it may have inspired you to higher understanding of the nature of intuition. This should be recorded, with a quick note next to it of how it helped you, so that later you can look back at your journey of discovery, retrace your steps, or recommend books to others.

The Suit of Swords/Air

The suit of Swords is commonly associated with the element of Air, the element of the human mind, powers of comprehension, and ability to communicate. Thus in the Swords cards we often see the ways in which we approach everyday events from an intellectual perspective, or how we begin to make sense of things logically. These cards often also deal with the process of discovery, research, questioning, and the application of logic to find a solution. However, due to the nature of swords many of these cards also demonstrate conflict between people or conclusions.

Ace of Swords

This card is the application of mental capability in its purest form: logic, philosophy, knowledge, and science. Battles of word and wit rather than sword against shield are shown here, and with this card any debates or thoughts that occur take place under the eyes of Sophia, Goddess of Wisdom and patroness of philosophers. When the Ace of Swords appears in a reading, it brings a quick, logical solution to a problem, but not necessarily a pleasant one: this card leaves little room for emotion or feeling, since these can often cloud judgment. The Ace of Swords also cuts away useless ideas or illogical modes of thought, and urges us to clear and thorough communication to make our ideas evident to others. The Aces in the Tarot often represent the transforming of potential into action, and in this case we transform ideas into action using knowledge, intellect, communication, and wisdom.

Two of Swords

The number of duality in the suit of the mind reminds us of the phrase "to be of two minds" about something. The Two of Swords presents us with choices, options, and a crossroads at which we must make a decision.

Unfortunately, this decision is unlikely to be an easy one, as we only have certain facts about each option: we feel like we are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, between a rock and a hard place. Nevertheless, one cannot stay in two minds forever, so the Two of Swords reminds us that a decision must be made, sooner rather than later.

Three of Swords

One of the more common images for this card is that of a heart being drenched with heavy rain, pierced through with three swords. This image provokes a strong reaction, and immediately suggests interpretations of heartache, love triangles, pain, and hurt. On one level, the Three of Swords can represent the hurt and pain we cause ourselves if we over-think our emotional lives, or perform post-mortems on emotional responses; on another level, it can show us the grief we feel when others use their words

to hurt us where it hurts the most: the heart. The rain will wash away the blood, and one day the hurt will go away; but until then, tears must be shed and the hurt must be allowed to take its natural course.

Four of Swords

Sometimes in life everything seems to get on top of us, and we worry so much that we become ill, both physically and mentally. Usually the best cure for this is a break from troubles, difficulties, and the pressures of everyday life. This is what the Four of Swords is: a rest from it all. As such, this card represents a suspension of activity, a time when we reach a plateau and don't do much. It is a time of reflection, a pause for thought, and time for recuperation and solitude when we can be alone with ourselves and not have to worry about everybody else and our everyday troubles. It's a time of seclusion and retreat during which we can heal ourselves. From the silent pauses come some of our most influential and inspired thoughts and projects.

Five of Swords

The imbalance of the Fives added to this suit brings us a conflict of perspectives or words, unfair battles of rumors and false gossip. It indicates that opponents in these battles are not evenly matched, one using trickery, deceit, and unfair tactics to better the other. It also suggests that the people involved in a situation are more keen to see themselves victorious than they are to create an amenable, reasonable solution among themselves. When ego is applied to our mental processes and conversations, manipulation and falsehood often ensue. As an advisory card, the Five of Swords warns the querent that somebody (or even themselves) is cheating them in some way, or that conflict is going to arise from the situation shortly.

Six of Swords

Titled "Science" in the Thoth Tarot, and showing a person being ferried across a river on a boat in the Rider-Waite Tarot, the Six of Swords represents the mental journey through the labyrinth of discovery, beginning with the question and ending with the conclusion ... which leads to another

question. Here is the never-ending quest for knowledge that takes us deeper into our own minds and expands our understanding. It can also represent other kinds of journeys, including transitional phases and rites of passage.

Seven of Swords

In the Seven of Swords we meet the thief and spy, a truly dishonest and untrustworthy character. This card often shows an image of somebody sneaking away clutching stolen goods in his arms and looking very shady. The meaning of this card is very simple, and its main theme is theft. This theft may take the form of physical theft of goods and money, but it can also suggest theft of ideas and somebody "stealing your thunder" by taking credit for your hard work. Along with this theft come deception, manipulation, unreliability, and espionage. Sometimes the Seven of Swords can also indicate politics and the machinations therein. Business espionage is also suggested, and lies of all kinds indicated.

Eight of Swords

Eights are sometimes seen as double-Fours, giving them added stability and manifestation. However, in the suit of Swords this can indicate the trapping of the mind or feelings of being bound to something-sometimes unwillingly, sometimes through our own actions or words. Often this card suggests the querent is being held back by circumstances external to themselves, but that if they were to apply their mind to the problem they might find a way out. In this card we also find one of the biggest causes of people being held back: self-defeating attitudes. "I can't" are the words spoken by this card, and those words can be the death-knell for projects, hopes, and freedom.

Nine of Swords

In the Rider-Waite image, this card shows a person sitting up in bed in the middle of the night, hands covering the face. The Thoth deck titles it "Cruelty." This is not a pleasant card. In here we find our mind over-analyzing and bringing us fears, worries, anxieties, and the issues associated with them. All the sleepless nights spent worrying about what will happen in the future, the insomnia brought on by anxiety issues, night terrors,

mental illness, and the effects on other people. The cruelty can be caused by others, and sometimes this card will indicate a relationship in which one person is a victim rather than an equal participant. But the cruelty is most often caused by ourselves, and the Nine of Swords urges us to seek help for our worries. It also reminds us that sometimes our worries are unfounded or do not reflect reality, and we confuse the issue by making a mountain out of a molehill.

Ten of Swords

Sometimes called the worst card in the pack, the Ten of Swords represents the ruin of everything the querent has been working for. Whereas the Ten of Cups showed us the happy ending, the Ten of Swords shows us the very unhappy ending to a project or relationship. This card foretells ruin and backstabbing, and suggests that the mind has sunk to the lowest depths of despair; the body is in ruin, the heart is broken, and the querent does not know who they are, where they are going, or what they want to do. Nothing is good, nothing is right. But once we get this low, the only way to go from here is up. The Ten of Swords often presents itself as a possibility for self-analysis: when our lives have been taken apart, we can examine the constituent parts and work out a more suitable path.

* QUESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

- What do you regularly apply your mind to? How intellectual do you feel? (Ace of Swords)
- What was the last big decision you had to make? How did it feel? Did you make the right choice? (Two of Swords)
- Have you ever felt or caused heartache? (Three of Swords)
- What do you do when you need to wind down and recuperate? (Four of Swords)
- Have you ever cheated somebody? Have you ever been cheated? What was the last conflict you were in and what caused and resolved

it? (Five of Swords)

- What kind of questions do you often ask about the world? How do you go about finding answers? (Six of Swords)
- Are you a good liar? (Seven of Swords)
- Have you ever felt tied down to something or somebody? What caused this? How do you free yourself? (Eight of Swords)
- How do you react when you experience worry or anxiety? (Nine of Swords)
- What is the lowest you have ever felt? What caused it? How did you recover? (Ten of Swords)

Elemental Interaction in Readings

A useful technique for gaining interpretations in your Tarot readings is to apply the principles of elemental interaction between the cards. We know that each suit is associated with an element, and in Lesson 6 we also explored some of the elements that can be found in the Major Arcana, and in Lesson 13 we looked at the elements in the Court Cards. Given these associations, whenever you do a reading you should be able to analyze it elementally as well as in other ways. When you have the cards in front of you, consider the following points:

- How many cards from each suit are present? This might suggest a predominance of a particular element and therefore a state of being or area of the querent's life.
- Do the cards form any particular shapes between them? For example, is there a triangle of Swords cards? What does the triangle symbolize? Are all the Cups cards in the beginning of the reading?
- Do you see certain elements present in the Major Arcana Cards that are also present in the Minor Arcana Cards in the spread? This might

suggest that the Minors present are a reflection of the Majors, or suggest a link in the interpretation.

- If you are performing a spread that has elemental positions (for example, the Elemental Spread), are the cards that appear in those positions balanced? Is there a Fire card in the Fire position? Alternatively, do the elements present interact with each other well? If a Water card is in the Earth position, it might suggest that the card is nourishing the things represented by that position, but if a Water card is present in the Fire position, it might suggest the things represented by that card are extinguishing those represented by the position.

Astrology and the Minor Arcana

In Lesson 11, we examined how the system of Astrology has been applied to the Tarot, with particular reference to the Court Cards and the Major Arcana. The Minor Arcana Cards have also been given astrological significance. We have already seen that there are thirty-six decans in the zodiac (each holding ten degrees of the 360 degree cycle from year to year). In the Kabbalistic system known as the Schemhamephoresch there are seventy-two holy names of God that reflect aspects of Him and which are represented by angels, and so a pair of these names/angels has been attributed to the thirty-six decans, and therefore to the thirty-six Minor Arcana Cards of the Tarot (without the Aces). These names of God have associations that reflect the nature of the Minor Arcana, particularly in the occult Tarot tradition such as in the Thoth Tarot:

<i>Angel</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Minor Arcana</i>
1 Vehaviah	God the Exalter	5 of Wands
2 Yelayel	Strength	
3 Sitael	Confidence, Fortress	6 of Wands
4 Almah	Concealed, Strong	
5 Mahashiah	Seeks safety	7 of Wands
6 Lelahel	Praiseworthy	
7 Akayah	Long suffering	8 of Coins
8 Kahethel	Adorable	
9 Haziell	Merciful	9 of Coins
10 Eldayah	Profitable	
11 Laviah	To be exalted	10 of Coins
12 Hihaayah	Refuge	
13 Yezalel	Rejoicing	2 of Swords
14 Mebahel	Guardian, Preserver	
15 Hariel	Aid	3 of Swords
16 Haqamah	Raise up, praying night & day	
17 Levayah	Wonderful	4 of Swords
18 Keliel	Worthy to be invoked	

<i>Angel</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Minor Arcana</i>
19 Luvayah	Hastening to hear	5 of Cups
20 Phaheliah	Redeemer, liberator	
21 Nelakhel	Thou alone	6 of Cups
22 Yeyayel	Thy right hand	
23 Melohel	Turning away evil	7 of Cups
24 Chahaviah	Goodness in himself	
25 Nethahiah	Wide, the enlarger	8 of Wands
26 Haayah	Heaven in secret	
27 Yerathel	Deliverer	9 of Wands
28 Saahiah	Taker away of evils	
29 Reyayel	Expectation	10 of Wands
30 Urael	Patient	
31 Lekhabel	Teacher	2 of Coins
32 Veshiriah	Upright	
33 Yechaviah	Knower of all	3 of Coins
34 Lehachiah	Merciful, clement	
35 Kuqiah	To be rejoiced in	4 of Coins
36 Menadel	Honorable	
37 Eniel	Lord of virtues	5 of Swords
38 Chaamiah	The hope of all the ends of the earth	
39 Rehael	Swift to condone	6 of Swords
40 Yeyezel	Making joyful	
41 Hehahel	Triune	7 of Swords
42 Mayakhel	Who is like unto him	
43 Vuliah	King and ruler	8 of Cups
44 Yelahiah	Abiding forever	
45 Saalish	Mover of all	9 of Cups
46 Eriel	Revealer	
47 Esheliah	Just judge	10 of Cups
48 Mayahel	Sending forth as a Father	
49 Vehuel	Great and lofty	2 of Wands

<i>Angel</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Minor Arcana</i>
50 Deniel	Merciful judge	
51 Hechashiah	Secret, Impenetrable	3 of Wands
52 Amemiah	Covered in darkness	
53 Nanael	Caster down of the proud	4 of Wands
54 Nithael	Celestial king	
55 Mibahayah	Eternal	5 of Coins
56 Puyael	Supporting all things	
57 Nemamah	Lovable	6 of Coins
58 Yeyelel	Hearer of cries	
59 Harachel	Permeating all	7 of Coins
60 Mitzrael	Raising up the oppressed	
61 Vembael	The name which is over all	8 of Swords
62 Yahohel	The supreme end or essence	
63 Anuel	Rejoicing	9 of Swords
64 Machiel	Vivifying	
65 Dambayah	Fountain of wisdom	10 of Swords
66 Meneqel	Nourishing all	
67 Ayael	Delights of the sons of men	2 of Cups
68 Chavuyah	Most liberal giver	
69 Razahel	Beholding all	3 of Cups
70 Yebemiah	Producing by his word	
71 Hayayel	Lord of the universe	4 of Cups
72 Mumiah	End of the universe	

* EXERCISE 18.3

For the following cards, compare the meanings you have created or come across in this book or other sources with the pair of names given to them by the Schemhamphoresch table above. Ask yourself if you feel these names add to your understanding of the cards or highlight a particular nuance of meaning.

- Six of Coins: Nemamiah (Lovable), Yeyalel (Hearer of Cries)
- Seven of Wands: Mahashiah (Seeks protection), Lelahel (Praiseworthy)
- Two of Wands: Vehuel (Great and lofty), Deniel (Merciful Judge)
- Two of Cups: Ayael (Delights of the sons of men), Chavuyah (Most liberal giver)
- Ten of Wands: Reyayel (Expectation), Umael (Patient)

Linked to this, the Golden Dawn system of the Tarot has each Minor Arcana card as an expression of the force of a given planet (let's say Jupiter) within a decan of the zodiac (Mars expressed through the first ten degrees of Aries). This allows us to analyze the Minor Arcana in terms similar to those of the Court Cards and Major Arcana, and provides us with an abstract conception of the Minors that can remain open until a reading when that concept can be applied specifically. These attributes are as follows:

<i>Minor Arcana</i>	<i>Decan</i>	<i>Ruler</i>
5 of Wands	1 Leo	Saturn
6 of Wands	2 Leo	Jupiter
7 of Wands	3 Leo	Mars
8 of Coins	1 Virgo	Sun
9 of Coins	2 Virgo	Venus
10 of Coins	3 Virgo	Mercury
2 of Swords	1 Libra	Moon
3 of Swords	2 Libra	Saturn
4 of Swords	3 Libra	Jupiter
5 of Cups	1 Scorpio	Mars
6 of Cups	2 Scorpio	Sun
7 of Cups	3 Scorpio	Venus
8 of Wands	1 Sagittarius	Mercury
9 of Wands	2 Sagittarius	Moon

<i>Minor Arcana</i>	<i>Decan</i>	<i>Ruler</i>
10 of Wands	3 Sagittarius	Saturn
2 of Coins	1 Capricorn	Jupiter
3 of Coins	2 Capricorn	Mars
4 of Coins	3 Capricorn	Sun
5 of Swords	1 Aquarius	Venus
6 of Swords	2 Aquarius	Mercury
7 of Swords	3 Aquarius	Moon
8 of Cups	1 Pisces	Saturn
9 of Cups	2 Pisces	Jupiter
10 of Cups	3 Pisces	Mars
2 of Wands	1 Aries	Mars
3 of Wands	2 Aries	Sun
4 of Wands	3 Aries	Venus
5 of Coins	1 Taurus	Mercury
6 of Coins	2 Taurus	Moon
7 of Coins	3 Taurus	Saturn
8 of Swords	1 Gemini	Jupiter
9 of Swords	2 Gemini	Mars
10 of Swords	3 Gemini	Sun
2 of Cups	1 Cancer	Venus
3 of Cups	2 Cancer	Mercury
4 of Cups	3 Cancer	Moon

These attributes present the Minor Arcana as a series of subtle interactions between planetary and zodiacal forces. You can gain inspiration for your card interpretations by using your knowledge of the planetary associations and zodiacal representations.

EXERCISE 18.4

Using the table above, analyze the following Minor Arcana cards, focusing particularly on comparing your already perceived interpretations with those you gain from the table. You might already be aware of the forces expressed by each planet and zodiac sign from previous exercises in Lesson 11, but otherwise do a little research on the Internet or in an introductory book on astrology to familiarize yourself with them.

- Five of Cups (1 Scorpio-Mars)
- Four of Wands (3 Aries-Venus)
- Two of Swords (1 Libra-Moon)
- Eight of Wands (1 Sagittarius-Mercury)
- Seven of Coins (3 Taurus-Saturn)

If this system seems to give you results that you find useful, you may like to go through each of the Minor Arcana cards in turn and apply it, creating your own system of interpretations based on it.

Optional Homework

- For at least three of the Minor Arcana from the suit of Swords write a Tarot journal entry, using Exercises 2.4 and 2.5.
- Before moving on to the next lesson, write some notes about your personal view of:
 - What magic is
 - What will is
 - How you use your willpower
 - How you effect change in the world around you

Further Reading

Encyclopedia of Tarot volumes 1-4, by Stuart R. Kaplan. Contains articles, historical research, and a vast number of catalogued Tarot decks with images and descriptions. A great way to keep up with the new decks being added to the market!

The Story of the Waite-Smith Tarot, by K. Frank Jensen. An excellent historical look at the development and birth of the Rider-Waite Tarot pack.

Yeats, the Tarot, and the Golden Dawn, by Kathleen Raine. A historical examination of the esoteric activities and writings of William Butler Yeats, the well-loved Irish Romantic poet of the 19th and 20th centuries, and his activities in the magical order of the Golden Dawn and the Tarot.

Tarot Symbolism, by Robert V. O'Neill, is a collection of writings on the history of the Tarot, particularly focusing on its symbolism.

19

THE MINOR ARCANA: MAGIC, THE WILL, AND WANDS/FIRE

Our final foray into the Minor Arcana takes us to the suit of Wands, and the magical application of Tarot. We'll also explore the use of Tarot as a spiritual tool for selfawareness and development.

The Suit of Wands/Fire

The suit of Wands is commonly associated with the element of Fire, the element that governs our passions, sense of self, ego, drive, energy, will, and magical/spiritual selves. Many of the cards also show the creative process in action and the manifestation of our will on both ourselves and the world around us.

Ace of Wands

The number of beginnings in the suit of energy and will brings us a powerful explosion of drive and passion. In the Ace of Wands, we find the first divine spark that kick-starts creation, the first seed of a creative idea that drives us forward and begins the creative process, and the first kindling of a sense of self. Here also is the raw, untapped energy needed to keep things moving, and the directed will in the stages before a definite goal is set. In a reading, the Ace of Wands suggests the querent has no shortage of energy, and if they need to get something done they will have no problems.

Two of Wands

When the number of duality meets the suit of Wands, we find the second part of the creative process: putting an original idea together with a goal, drawing a line from beginning to end and creating a plan of action. In the Two of Wands we see organization of a creative project, form being given to an idea, and all possibilities considered. Here also is the querent as the ruler of their creative and magical energy, exercising their control over their projects. The Two of Wands is a good card for any businessperson or business endeavor, career, or creative project as it suggests careful planning and foresight combined with drive, will, and desire: an unbeatable combination!

Three of Wands

Three is the number of action, being the direct result of one and two. When an inspiration is given form through planning and applied effort, it requires action to manifest as a result. In the Three of Wands, we find inspiration taking hold of one's life, inspiring further projects and goals; it can also indicate teamwork and other people's energy and drive being added to a

project or endeavor. The Three of Wands advises the querent to ensure they apply their will and energy to a goal, rather than just planning it or being inspired. In some senses this card can also be seen as practical inspiration rather than intellectual or spiritual inspiration: the kind that makes you jump out of your chair, grab your artist's tools, and start creating immediately.

Four of Wands

In the Four of Wands, we see the beauty of completion-the results of our inspiration and applied will, and the celebration that can be enjoyed afterward. This card is reminiscent of Harvest Festivals or Thanksgiving Day, where a community gathers together to celebrate its achievements and people, and when thanks are given for all that has come to them over the past year. An important part of this card is the gratitude we must feel when we have completed a project or seen the harvest of our efforts, and we must not forget the people who helped us along the way. The Four of Wands advises us to feast, enjoy the rewards of our labor, and give gratitude to ourselves, others, and the universe that enabled the project to reach manifestation.

Five of Wands

This card often depicts a battle raging between five people wielding quarterstaves. Many people confuse it with the Five of Swords since both show conflict of some kind; however, whereas the Five of Swords shows conflict in which one party is cheated, the Five of Wands shows a conflict that is fair, sometimes takes place on an inner level, and is only a testing ground for later difficulties. Here is the sparring undergone in intensive combat training, the competition against school friends in sports, and the pub quiz on a Friday night. Healthy competition and conflict train our minds and bodies, and can act as a catalyst for change and initiation. Sometimes the conflict shown in this card is simply for play, and the winner is already decided. The Five of Wands advises the querent to take a positive approach to competition, and use it as a means to improve their technique and understanding.

Six of Wands

When the battle is fought and the day is done, the hero can ride home on his horse to the waiting, welcoming, cheering crowd eager to celebrate his brave deeds. The Six of Wands represents the victory we experience when we achieve our goals and overcome an obstacle-it is the marathon runner reaching the finish line, and the last few words of a dissertation. This card also shows us the acclaim we receive from others after a job well done: a raise at work, top grades, congratulations, and positive feedback. At times the Six of Wands also indicates a promotion. On an inner level, this card shows us the feeling of being on top of the world, completely invincible after a great achievement. It shows confidence in oneself and a belief that anything is possible.

Seven of Wands

Another card that often depicts a conflict taking place, the Seven of Wands only shows a single main figure being beset by assailants on all sides, who may or may not be seen. This indicates a time when the querent must stand up for what they believe in and face opposition against the odds. Their position is weak, they are low on energy and finding it difficult to keep up with something, but perseverance is the only way to possibly win in this situation. To give up now would be certain loss, but to push onward-while not guaranteeing victory-will certainly improve the chances! Further, the Seven of Wands shows that the querent has very little left to lose by taking a chance, but everything to gain if they succeed, so courage is the best policy. Sometimes this card suggests that the querent is undergoing some form of bullying or pressure from others, and that they feel they are the weaker person; only standing up to these people will prevent further difficulties.

Eight of Wands

Here is energy and drive shooting forth into the universe at an alarming rate! The Eight of Wands is a card of lofty ideas, momentum, and passionate ambition. The Thoth deck calls it "Swiftness," suggesting fast

progress through a project, evolution, and an inability to stick to one place or task for very long. This card shows an ambition that is useful but can lead to hubris and overexertion: the querent, when taken up by the momentum of their energy and ambition, may not realize when they need to stop, and will keep climbing higher and higher. The story of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun, is particularly apt here. This card suggests that the querent may be putting too much energy into too many things in their life, and needs to relax and let a few things go before exhaustion kicks in. However, this card bodes well for most projects and suggests completion and achievement will arrive sooner than expected, and that events surrounding the querent will push things forward rapidly.

Nine of Wands

This is the calm in the eye of the storm. Often we find that we strive through one difficulty only to be given rest for a little while before facing a new onslaught, and we don't feel ready or recuperated enough for it. The Nine of Wands is that brief pause between trials, the opportunity to gather as much strength as possible before returning to the fray. The Thoth deck calls it "Strength," and it represents the strength of energy and self needed to persevere and re-enter difficult situations. It is also the will to power that drives us forward and, given the opportunity, can become an unstoppable force to contend with the world and its obstacles.

Ten of Wands

The Ten of Wands shows us what happens when we have an excess of projects, duties, and responsibilities: burdens weigh us down and we become exhausted. It also represents the consequences of the choices we make or the actions we perform, and how some consequences may weigh heavily on our shoulders. At times this card indicates somebody with a martyr complex, eager to shoulder more responsibilities, guilt, burdens, and tasks. Due to the nature of the Wands suit, the Ten of Wands often manifests as the querent's energy and creativity causing them to start too many projects and endeavors, putting themselves under a great amount of stress and pressure to get them completed. Sometimes this is necessary, but the

Ten of Wands warns the querent that prolonged stress can only have negative consequences.

* QUESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

- How do you begin projects? (Ace of Wands)
- Are you a good planner? How have you organized your creative life? (Two of Wands)
- What has been your experience of teamwork? Are you good at taking action upon your inspiration and plans? (Three of Wands)
- Do you have a community? What do you have to be thankful for? (Four of Wands)
- What has tested you in the past? Are you a competitive person? (Five of Wands)
- What have you achieved that you are proud of? What aspects of your personality do people compliment you for? (Six of Wands)
- Do you have something in your life that you'd stand up for in the face of oppression and difficulty? (Seven of Wands)
- When you take action, is it slowly or with force and swiftness? How do you think you could slow down/speed up your progress? (Eight of Wands)
- How strong is your willpower? (Nine of Wands)
- What are your burdens? What responsibilities do you have? Do you have any projects? Do you feel you take on too much or not enough? (Ten of Wands)

If you completed the last lesson's optional homework, you will have some notes about your feelings, ideas, and experiences of magic, willpower, and how you effect change in the world around you. Review those notes, because they will form the basis of your understanding of the fundamentals of magic using the Tarot.

The subject of magic is a vast and complex one, and we do not have room here for even a basic introduction to it. If you want to learn more, check out the Further Reading list. For a basic foundation, we will be using a definition of magic given by Aleister Crowley:

“Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will. ”

Although this definition can be applied to most mundane acts as well as acts of magic, in most cases it should be taken in the context of a ritual or trancelike state. Not everybody believes in magic, and if you are one of those folks, then you are free to move on to the next lesson with no loss. However, for many people Tarot is directly linked to their magical and spiritual lives, and is not just a tool for divination and fortune-telling but a powerful system of symbolism that expresses certain magical tenets about the universe, such as "As Above, So Below" (see Lesson 3, The Magician). Some Tarot readers use the cards as a tool in their magical practice and results magic. There are a number of ways in which Tarot can be used magically, and we'll cover only a few of them here. As you develop further your ideas on Tarot and magic, you will certainly find ways of working with both that suit you.

Affirmations

We have already explored the use of affirmations in Lesson 15-Your Personal Tarot Court. Affirmations are positive statements that can be remembered, repeated, and meditated upon in order to convince your mind that they are true, thus bringing about change in your psyche. Although we have only used them in conjunction with the Court Cards, affirmations can

be created with any Tarot card in mind, and these affirmations used as parts of larger rituals and spells.

EXERCISE 19.1

Shuffle your deck and draw a single card from anywhere within it. Ask yourself how this card relates to you at this time and what it has to teach you about yourself and current feelings. Now, review Exercise 15.10 to 15.11, with their descriptions of how to create affirmations, and create some suitable ones for this card.

Altar Pieces, Devotional Images

Many people who practice magic will set up temporary or permanent altars for various purposes. These altars are sometimes seasonal, and used to celebrate religious festivals or yearly changes. They can be devoted to a particular deity to receive offerings, praise, or meditation; they may be created for a purpose of results magic. Whatever the reason for creating an altar, the Tarot provides a treasure trove of images that can be used upon it. Many of the Tarot images have symbolism that can be found mirrored in religious traditions, holidays, and deities throughout the world, and they evoke a strong response in those who behold them. It is common to find Tarot cards used in this way upon Western altars, particularly Pagan ones.

SEASONAL CHANGES. If you are celebrating a time of year, such as the Summer Solstice, and creating an altar to reflect the seasonal changes of that religious festival, you might choose a Tarot card to reflect these changes in the world around you. You might also find that the external changes have an effect upon you internally, and thus you might choose a Tarot card that reflects your feelings at this time. These cards would be placed upon the altar as signifiers for both yourself and the time of year, and act as a way for you to consciously analyze what happens to you every Summer Solstice, how the seasonal changes are affecting you, and how this is manifesting in your life.

* EXERCISE 19.2

Choose a religious festival that you are familiar with (even if it is something as common as Christmas or Hanukkah) and think about what that festival or time of year means to you. How does it affect your everyday life? How do you respond to it? What do you do at this festival? Based on these reflections, choose a card from the Tarot pack that you think expresses both the concept of the festival as well as your personal feelings about it. Write in your Tarot journal your reasons for choosing this card-you may find that you gain new insights into the card as well as the festival!

DEVOTIONAL IMAGES. If you work with, revere, or worship a particular deity, you may wish to create an altar (either temporary or permanent) upon which you can place images of that deity or things that remind you of him/her. This is a personal matter, and some people may feel that placing Tarot cards on the altar of certain deities would be tantamount to sacrilege; however for others, it is a natural activity.

EXERCISE 19.3

If you work with a deity, heroic figure, or saint, think about some of their attributes, stories, and symbolism. Choose a card from the Tarot deck that you feel represents this best. Why have you chosen that card? Is it for the symbolism, the card meaning, or something else? If you wanted to, you could get a copy of this card and place it on any altar you might have, or use it in other ways to remind you of the deity: incorporate it into a collage, jewelry, keep it in your diary, decorate it and use it as a shrine in itself, and more. The possibilities are endless!

Results Magic

For magic practitioners performing a spell (also called results magic) to bring about desired changes is commonplace, and is used alongside mundane action to increase the chances of reaching a goal. There are as many ways of creating and performing a spell as there are people who do it, so these are just a few ways in which Tarot cards can be used to augment a spell or act as part of it.

- Images of desired outcome or goal: For instance, if you were performing a spell for resolving domestic difficulties, you might choose the Ten of Cups to represent your goal: a happy, loving family. In a way, this is like creating an affirmation but with an image instead of words (though affirmations could be used at the same time). This card could then be focused on and remembered clearly during the magical working, so that the goal is always present.
- Talismanic images: A card (from an incomplete, old, or broken deck) could be used to create a talisman for a purpose. This card is placed upon an altar during the magical working, and when the energy has been raised or invoked it is driven into the card. This is then kept wrapped in black silk (to keep the energy in) and worn near you (maybe in your breast pocket), kept near your place of work (a computer desk drawer), or brought out for later magical work with a similar purpose.
- Divination: You can use your skills as a Tarot reader to divine whether the use of magic in certain cases would be advisable or not. Drawing only a few cards not only shows you factors you hadn't considered, but could show you the outcome and effects of performing the spell, and anything that it is of your control. This is particularly recommended if you are emotional or upset when considering performing a spell, or if the intended magic is complex and abstract.

Rituals

Tarot can also be used in a variety of ways during ritual, as well as for inspiration for large rituals and group rituals. As with the Spells above, the ways they can be used are entirely dependent upon the individual and their practices, so these are just a few suggestions.

- Representations of the elements: In many Pagan rituals, the four elements are called upon to add their blessing or power to the ritual and participants. Often, the four directions (North, South, East, West) are linked to an element, and in the ritual space these directions might

bear representations of each element—a candle for South/Fire, for example, or a growing plant for North/Earth. However, you could also use the four Aces of the Tarot, the four suits, the Pages, etc., as representations for these elements.

- Group discussion/spell working: In a group ritual, it is always nice to have everybody participating. Tarot cards can provide an excellent way of starting group discussion, giving people a blessing to go home with, and more. For instance, at the end of the ritual, everybody might be invited to choose a card from the pack and the group can reflect upon this and how it relates to that person. They are then given a thought or blessing to take home with them (giving the card itself back!) that they can remember the ritual with. In discussion, the card chosen by each participant can form the basis of somebody's thought and act as inspiration for the direction of the discussion and self-reflection.

- Archetypal images: Mystery plays are often used in group rituals, sometimes based on myths and therefore Gods and Goddesses, with participants in the ritual taking roles. However, the Major Arcana of the Tarot could be used as inspiration for figures or stories for a mystery play. For instance, somebody could dress as the bountiful, motherly Empress during a Pagan Lughnassadh (harvest) festival, and interact with the participants or give a speech, or even lead the ritual. I have also heard of Handfastings (weddings) where people dressed as each of the Major Arcana have given particular blessings or short speeches to the happy couple.

Pathworking the Tarot

Pathworking is a technique for visualization and meditation that allows the user to explore and evaluate their self, their relationship with the universe around them, other people, and the symbolism that makes up the divine nature of the world. Although some pathworkings take the form of guided meditations, where one person leads the user through visualization with descriptions and commands, pathworking with the Tarot most often takes

the form of stepping through an astral doorway to allow for free interaction with the spiritual landscape within.

We are already familiar with the idea that the Tarot cards-particularly the Major Arcana-express universal, archetypal concepts and spiritual truths about our nature and our relation to the universe around us. By pathworking with the Tarot, we can develop a deeper understanding of these key concepts, becoming more aware and conscious. This technique is also used by Kabbalists who wish to pathwork the twenty-two paths of the Tree of Life-the twenty-two Major Arcana, being linked to these paths, become handy doorways that connect us to these paths, which can also be viewed as paths in the subconscious.

By pathworking with the Tarot, we also deepen our relationship with the cards themselves, since the way in which we interact with them when we have entered a pathworking enables us to understand the concept embedded in the card's symbolism, and how that concept and card relate to us personally. So much insight can be gained from pathworking that I highly recommend any Tarot student perform a pathworking for each of the Major Arcana and record their results in a Tarot journal.

Method

In order to perform a pathworking, you need to find yourself some time when you will not be disturbed for at least thirty minutes, and a space where you can sit quietly and comfortably. Lie down if you have knee or back problems. You will preferably darken the room so that it is only dimly lit (allowing your eyes to relax), and thus you might find that night time is the best time for this. Prior to entering your space, you will have chosen a card you wish to pathwork and keep it on hand. This card must be kept in a place where you can easily see it, and you will need to have its image memorized as clearly and accurately as possible.

Before you begin, if you wish, you can preface the pathworking with a cleansing or protective ritual of your own, but it is not necessary. What is necessary is that you sit or lie down comfortably in a position you know

you will be able to maintain for at least twenty minutes, and close your eyes, breathing deeply.

When you are sufficiently relaxed, visualize (in your mind's eye) yourself sitting in your current position with your eyes wide open, seeing the room around you. Take in as much detail as possible. Now visualize yourself stepping out of your body, rising from it or away from it, and moving around the room. Visualize the card that you are pathworking in front of you, enlarged and big enough to be a door. See it as vividly as you possibly can, trying to remember as many details as possible. When you have done that, reach out and see a door handle forming on the card. Turn it, and open the door, letting the card swing outward and toward you, revealing a way through.

From here, you're on your own. The landscape or vision you find beyond the door will vary greatly from person to person, but should retain an essence of the card. You may interact with the landscape and figures within the doorway, and walk any paths you find, asking questions of the figures and receiving answers. Often you will discover tasks set before you or obstacles to overcome: these represent blockages or tests you must remove in your own subconscious regarding the concepts contained in this card. When you feel you have completed your purpose here, return the way you came, exit through the same door, and ensure it is shut behind you. See your body sitting in the same position, and re-enter it, allowing yourself a few deep breaths and slow muscle movements before opening your eyes and returning to this world.

Advice

- This method can be extremely powerful, and if done correctly takes you onto the astral plane, and enables you to form connections with different aspects of that plane and your own subconscious. It is therefore to be respected, and not simply used because you're bored one evening. Try to perform a pathworking with a purpose in mind, even if it is only to gain further understanding of a particular card.

- If you are serious about gaining insight about yourself and the Tarot cards, I recommend pathworking each Major Arcana card three times: the first time will introduce you to the concepts and trials within; the second time will allow you to further your understanding and explore any questions that came up previously; and the third time allows you to conclude your review and ensure you've understood. I recommend that you leave at least a couple of days between each pathworking (preferably a week) to allow the messages and insights to integrate into your subconscious.
- Always record your results. This can take a while, and your memory of the pathworking will fade quickly-especially with some of the more abstract cards. Therefore it is wise to have a journal and pen ready for you to use straight after waking from the pathworking. Be as detailed as possible in your record, leave nothing out, even if it seems odd at the time; you may find it is revealed later. You can use these records for further pathworkings and to chart your progress.
- Pathwork the Major Arcana in order. This will allow you to see the Major Arcana as a spiritual journey for the soul. You can pathwork them from XXI The World to 0 The Fool or vice versa, depending on your approach. If you are incorporating the Kabbalah into your Tarot studies, I recommend beginning with XXI The World, since this relates to the path closest to our material world on the Tree of Life, and therefore your pathworkings will bring your subconscious back up through creation to unity with Godhead. However, if you are just a Tarot reader you might like to see this as the Fool's Journey, and thus work from 0 to XXI, viewing each card as a further expansion of the universe.
- If possible, do the pathworkings in a small group. This allows you (after you have recorded your individual results) to discuss with each other and gain insight. You will find that you receive surprisingly similar results, and that your discussion highlights factors that you may not have understood without being prompted by others.
 - Be aware that to undertake pathworkings for each of the Major Arcana is a long process, and may bring up personal issues and

blockages in your life. It will initiate change for the better, but you must be prepared to tackle things head-on.

EXERCISE 19.4

Perform a pathworking using the above technique for either XXI The World or 0 The Fool (depending on your approach). Record your results, and afterwards ask yourself how it has given you further insight into the card meaning and concept.

Using "Keys": The Missing Card in a Run

In larger spreads (eight cards or more), you may begin to notice a group of cards from a suit, or a run of cards from the Major Arcana. For instance, you may turn up groups of Cups, Swords, and Wands cards, but absolutely no Coins cards. You may have the Wheel of Fortune, Justice, Hanged Man, and Death. You may have Ace through Four of Wands. When these groups or runs appear they can often tell us more about the question and querent than we expected, and should be added to the reading. You may also find that you have a consecutive run of cards, such as the Ace through Five of Wands, but one card is missing, such as the Four of Wands. Again, this can be very telling. Why is the Four of Wands missing? This might be something missing from the current situation or the querent's life. If there are no Coin cards present, the querent may be lacking something represented by that suit. You may find as you go through a reading that this missing card becomes the key to solving the problem at hand, since what is missing in our lives is often the cause of many of our difficulties.

The "Who Am I?" Spread

The suit of Wands often raises issues about the nature of our selves, and our ability to act within the world in accordance with our will and energy. The following spread is useful for assessing our strengths, weaknesses, and personality at any given time and can be used on a yearly basis for comparison.

Card 1. What takes up most of my energy at time at the moment?

Card 2. What aspect of my personality is most often used at this time?

Card 3. What do I aspire for at this time?

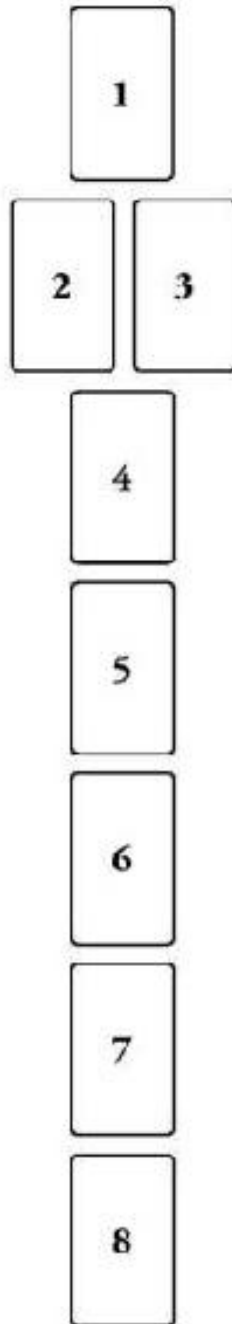
Card 4. How might I achieve this goal?

Card 5. What are my strengths?

Card 6. What are my weaknesses?

Card 7. How can I use my strengths to their best effect?

Card 8. How can I transform my weaknesses and ensure they do not burden me?



"Who Am I?" Spread

Optional Homework

- Write a Tarot journal entry for at least three of the Wands cards, using Exercises 2.4 and 2.5 as well as your own techniques. If you wish, you can do this for the entire Wands suit.
- Perform the "Who Am I?" Spread on yourself or for another person.
- Find a longer spread (the Celtic Cross or Zodiacal Spread) and perform it for yourself or another person. Note specifically if any groups of cards or consecutive runs of cards appear in this spread, and try to incorporate what they might mean into your overall interpretation.
- If Exercise 19.4 was useful to you, try pathworking all the Major Arcana. This homework, due to the time it takes to perform, is not a prerequisite for moving on with the final lessons!

Further Reading

Tarot Journeys, by Yasmine Galenorn, is a book that approaches the Major Arcana as guided visualizations. It comes with a CD with the first three meditations recorded, but you would need to record the rest yourself or have somebody read you through them. A nice introduction to the Major Arcana, although it leaves little room for your own interaction.

Magical Pathworking. • Techniques of Active Imagination, by Nick Farrell, is a useful guide to using pathworking as a magical technique, not just with Tarot but with many other symbols.

More Simplified Magic: Pathworking and the Tree of Life, by Ted Andrews and Pagyn Alexander-Harding, approaches pathworking from the Kabbalistic perspective.

Tarot Spells, by Janina Renee, contains a large number of results magic spells that can be used. It is no alternative for creating your own, but should inspire you!

Creative Visualization for Beginners, by Richard Webster, is an excellent introduction to improving your visualization technique.

Tarot and Magic: Images for Ritual and Pathworking, by Gareth Knight.

Portable Magic: Tarot Is the Only Tool You Need, by Donald Tyson.

Everyday Tarot Magic, by Dorothy Morrison.

Tarot and Magic, by Donald Michael Kraig.

20

THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

By this time, you should have a good understanding of the card meanings, symbolism, and method of performing readings for yourself and others. Throughout this course you have been given exercises in which you can practice your reading skills, so you should be familiar with the way in which the cards can relate to each other, and how you can create your interpretation using a wide variety of sources. These last few chapters deal with the issues you might face when reading for others, some advice on making the most of your Tarot readings, and ways you can further explore Tarot to a more advanced level.

Dealing With Difficult Questions/Querents

The more readings you perform for others, the wider range your experience of their questions will be! At first you might find that you get asked the same type of questions over and over: "Does X like me?" "Will I get this new job?" "How will my relationship with X turn out?" "What does my money situation look like in the future?" With many questions, you will gain an understanding of what parts of the question you need to address, and therefore be able to quickly and easily create an on-the-spot spread for the reading or use a time-honored favorite that you know applies well to that question. Such questions also come with very little difficulty and effort on your part-aside from the natural effort of giving the reading.

However, some questions are difficult, and some questioners more so. They might ask questions that are unusual and that surprise you. They might ask questions that are so emotionally loaded you find it difficult to relate the information to the querent. They might ask questions you just can't answer for legal or moral reasons. For instance:

- Questions about illegal activities
- Questions about activities you consider immoral
- Questions concerning situations that the querent should be approaching other organizations or people about, like the police, marriage counsellors, doctor, or helplines
- Questions concerning health and medical issues

While some people may be happy to give a reading regarding some illegal activities, certain illegal activities may require the Tarot reader to compromise their own code of confidentiality in order to help with criminal investigations or legal proceedings. It is up to you what questions you answer as a Tarot reader, but if at any time you feel the question compromises your innocence, you must end the reading and take action as you see fit. Please remember that being given information in some cases can make you an accomplice to a crime, and it is wise to report the matter directly to a legal authority.

When it comes to activities you consider immoral, you must be aware of the querent's need for aid on the matter. Morality is a subjective issue and if the activity does not break any laws, it is not open to judgment from the person who is in the role of advisor and counselor. It is extremely important that even if you disagree with the querent's perspective, approach, beliefs, or actions, you do not allow your differences to adversely affect the quality of your reading or your ability to communicate compassionately and effectively with the querent. Try to practice objectivity (see Lesson 5) at all times.

At times you may be approached with questions that would be better answered by others, and this is most often the case for health-related Tarot readings. These questions should not be answered, and the querent should be advised to make an appointment with their doctor. In many cases, the answer can be gained more simply through taking a medical test rather than going to a Tarot reader. In Lesson 10, Exercise 10.2, we looked at gathering contacts for groups, organizations, and people that the querent can be referred to in cases such as this.

As well as difficult questions you may have to deal with difficult querents. Unfortunately, not everybody who comes to you for a Tarot reading will be pleasant or stable, and thus you might meet:

Emotionally Needy Querents

These querents rely on the Tarot reading to give them hope and comfort during an extremely difficult time. Such querents often become very emotional during the reading, and having a box of tissues handy is useful. You will find that they want somebody to listen to them while they express their feelings, and this should not be a problem for an empathetic and compassionate Tarot reader, however you may find that this kind of querent takes up more time than you can give. It is up to you to find ways of gently ending the reading in a timely fashion and on an optimistic note.

Obnoxious Querents

Some people can become hostile for a wide variety of reasons, and it is very rarely the fault of the person on the receiving end! If this occurs, if you are made to feel uncomfortable by a querent or are spoken to disrespectfully, you have every right to end the reading immediately and remove yourself from the situation. Performing readings in a public place minimizes the chance of such an occurrence, but luckily it is highly unlikely anyway.

Drunk/Intoxicated Querents

While you may find that social events are a great way to get some practice readings in without too much pressure, intoxicated querents can become difficult during more serious readings. It is a matter of personal choice whether you agree to give a reading to an intoxicated person, but be aware that if you do, your level of communication with them will be hampered and they may not remember the reading as effectively afterward.

Querents in Danger

This is one of the worst-case scenarios, and it is highly unlikely you will be faced with it, but be aware of how you might react just in case. You may have a querent requesting a reading to help them in a dangerous situation: they may be experiencing domestic, sexual, or verbal abuse of some kind, fear for their safety, or be contemplating harming themselves. They may also fear for the safety and welfare of somebody they care about. In these situations, a Tarot reading is not going to help. Referring the querent to somebody or somewhere that can offer them safety and help is the only option. As nice as it is to think of ourselves as superheroes and empaths with enough compassion to solve every problem, we must not allow these thoughts to misguide us.

The Testing Querent

Some people come for a Tarot reading because they want to be impressed by your supernatural ability to see things nobody else could possibly know or to demonstrate your psychic powers. This is probably your greatest test as a Tarot reader, as this querent will force you to overcome any niggling doubts or fears you may still harbour regarding your skill and be on top

form. However, it may be necessary before you begin to explain the difference between psychic ability and Tarot skill (unless you are a psychic, in which case, no need!). You will often find that by giving an excellent and insightful reading to this querent they leave with a more open attitude to Tarot as well as some good advice. However, sometimes you may find that they are so shocked by an accurate reading that they become dismissive and closed. This depends entirely on the nature of the prediction, how it is delivered, and their own personality. With the testing querent, you must gauge their response throughout the reading to decide how to deliver it.

* EXERCISE 20.1

Make some notes in your Tarot journal about the kinds of questions you would be unable/unwilling to answer with a Tarot reading, and why. Is it due to your moral code? Awareness of your country's laws? Or perhaps an experience you have undergone that would compromise your objectivity?

EXERCISE 20.2

Try doing some fun Tarot readings for people at social events or places such as bars, night clubs, dinner parties, and house parties. Note the difference in their approach to the reading and reception of the information. Did you find you had to change your reading style or communication methods to accommodate the conditions or querent? How do you think it is different from reading for a more serious querent? Which do you prefer? Would you consider reading at these situations again?

Laws on Tarot

When offering professional readings (charging money for the service) you need to be aware of the laws concerning Tarot in your country. In the USA in 2007, Livingstone Parish, Louisiana, voted unanimously to ban any method of fortune-telling performed for money, and in the last two decades similar laws have been voted on (yet not passed) in states such as Florida, Oklahoma, and Nebraska. In the UK, practices such as Tarot readings,

spiritualism, seances, and complementary healing were protected by the Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951, which allowed practitioners, consumers, and the law to distinguish between genuine practitioners and con artists. However, this act was recently repealed and replaced by new consumer protection regulations that leave all practitioners-even the genuine ones-open to legal action from disgruntled or dissatisfied customers. Such laws and consideration of them come directly from a desire to protect consumers from fraud that is so easily committed under the guise of fortune telling and divination, yet it places the onus on the practitioner to protect themselves from allegations of fraud.

In some countries (including the USA and the UK) it is necessary to provide a disclaimer before your readings, stating that the reading is "for entertainment purposes only." While this may upset many readers who take the Tarot seriously as a tool for self-improvement and advice, it prevents the querent making a complaint that the Tarot reader's prediction was wrong or fraudulent, as it was for entertainment only. In some places, it is also required that you check that your querent is not "of a nervous disposition" or suffering from a heart condition or mental health problem at the time of the reading.

To avoid any difficulties on your part, it is vital that you check up-to-date sources for laws on Tarot and fortune-telling in your country or state and remain aware of them, as they can change.

Your Tarot Ethics

Whenever you read for another person, even if no money is changing hands, you must apply yourself to a code of ethics that has been created by you to reflect your style of reading, your purpose for being a Tarot reader, and your limits and boundaries as a reader. This serves to guide you in difficult situations and can form part of a code of conduct that can be written down for perusal by your querent, demonstrating to them your willingness to take the reading seriously and your trustworthy nature.

If you undergo certification from a Tarot organization such as the American Tarot Association or the Tarot Association of the British Isles, they may require you to adhere to their code of conduct and ethics during your readings. This is so they can ensure all their trained readers are providing an ethical service to querents, and that they are being represented in a positive manner. Creating a code of ethics for yourself starts you thinking about various situations you may be faced with, and shows querents that you are an intentionally moral, thinking person with their best interests at heart. A good code of ethics can form a solid foundation of trust between you and your querent.

You might find it helpful to consider the following in order to begin forming your own personal set of Tarot Ethics.

Reading for Minors

Would you read for somebody who is legally a minor? Would you do so with a parent or guardian present? Are you a minor? If the minor in question is a family member or friend, you are less likely to consider reading for them unethical, but when the minor requesting a reading is somebody else's child, the matter can get very difficult. I strongly recommend you do not perform any readings for people legally considered minors unless you are their parent or guardian, or have the parent/guardian present during the reading. However, some readers prefer not to read for any minors even if they are family members or friends, due to the belief that they are not yet mature enough to approach the reading sensibly and responsibly. If you are a minor yourself, you may take issue with this and prefer to read for others of your own age.

Reading for Money

The subject of taking money as payment for readings has been mentioned throughout this lesson, and it is a practice we are all likely to be aware of. This subject can cause contention among readers with different views on the Tarot, so it is up to you to decide what approach you take. Some readers believe that the Tarot is a gift we are born with, and therefore to charge

somebody for your spiritual gift is immoral. However, others believe that Tarot is a skill and talent that is learned, improved, and worked on, and therefore to charge money for this skill is the same as paying somebody for their artwork or paying a plumber for unblocking your sink. Another approach to accepting payment for readings is to use a barter system: you swap a Tarot reading for a haircut, meal, or favor!

Reading for Friends/Family

While it may seem natural to some to give Tarot readings to family members and friends (particularly for the purpose of practice), to others reading for people they know well prevents them from practicing objectivity. It may be difficult to read the cards in an unbiased way for people we know, or distance ourselves from their problems and give effective readings. However, some readers like to use their knowledge of the situation to inform their interpretations, allowing them to form a clearer picture and put the cards into a specific context for the querent.

Reading about Other People

Sometimes a Tarot reader may be asked to give a reading to tell the querent what another person is thinking or doing, like "Is my wife having an affair?" or "Is my friend hiding something from me?"

It is natural to ask these questions, especially if we suspect something is being kept secret from us that we think we should know, but some Tarot readers think it is unethical to answer such questions; it is akin to acting as a private investigator or spy. It is also necessary to ask the querent why they are unable to communicate with the third person and ask such questions of them, or to consider that there might be a very good reason that something is being hidden from the querent. Many Tarot readers regard it as a breach of the third person's confidentiality and an infringement of their will and right to privacy to read for such questions. However, other Tarot readers will read for such questions, and if the questions are worded in a way that puts the onus on the querent for action and positive communication with the

third person, the reading can act as a foundation for resolving the underlying issues in the situation.

Repetitive Readings

Some querents have a tendency to return on a frequent basis for more readings, always asking the same or a similar question. This can be for many reasons, but mostly because they have yet to accept the truth of the situation in question and how they must act to resolve it. They hope that the next reading will tell them something different, something they wish to hear. Due to this quite common problem, many readers put a requisite time period between readings for a querent—perhaps once a month. This gives the querent time to integrate the reading's message into their everyday lives and begin to make changes, and hopefully prevents them from becoming addicted to the Tarot or reliant on it. However, many Tarot readers do not mind repeating readings and dislike refusing somebody who probably needs help and reassurance.

Manipulative Readings

I am sure that anybody who has read this far into the lessons would be considering the following, but it is worth mentioning, since sometimes we act like this without realizing it. In order to be an ethical Tarot reader, you must not use the Tarot or a reading to defraud people, con them in any way, or manipulate them. The obvious example is the reader who sees a terrible curse in the cards, a curse that only they can break and protect the querent from, for the reasonable price of \$2,000. Quite frankly, this action is despicable and it preys upon the most vulnerable querents, abusing our role as advisor and counselor. However, we may find ourselves manipulating the reading subtly without necessarily fraudulent intentions: if you are reading for a friend or relative regarding a choice that you have an opinion on, you may find yourself interpreting the reading in a way that supports your opinion. This is a very easy trap to walk into, so always be aware of your objective approach to the reading. If in doubt, try Exercise 5.7, "The Other Side of the Cards," during your reading.

Client Confidentiality

People can sometimes tell a Tarot reader more than they would tell anybody else, especially if they have not met the reader before. A Tarot reader is an impartial force who represents destiny, the future, and the mystical aspect of the universe, so it is naturally easier for a querent to reveal dark secrets or feelings to us rather than a friend or family member. We must consider the necessity for client confidentiality at all times. This provides that the Tarot reader (or anybody in a position to accept information from somebody) should not reveal any information about the querent to anybody else, unless they have consent from the querent or a clear legal reason for doing so. The laws on this subject are changing rapidly, so if you are ever in a position that you feel requires you to break this code, it is wise to seek legal advice. Otherwise, this code should remain unbroken, and you should not give your querent's trust in you cause to waver. This does not just refer to revealing data about the querent (name, address, telephone number) but also talking about the content of the reading with others.

EXERCISE 20.3

Using some of the suggestions above for areas to consider, start writing down some notes in your Tarot journal about your personal Tarot ethics. Will you read for children? How old must a querent be before you'll read for them? Are you comfortable reading for somebody more than once a week? Would you accept payment for readings, and if so, how much? What would you do if a querent confessed a crime during a reading? How will you ensure client confidentiality?

The Reading Style Spread

This spread is designed to help you reflect upon your style of reading, your style of communicating with the querent, and your approach to reading for others. I find it useful to act as a foundation for analysis and improvement.

Card 1. How do I develop interpretations of individual cards?

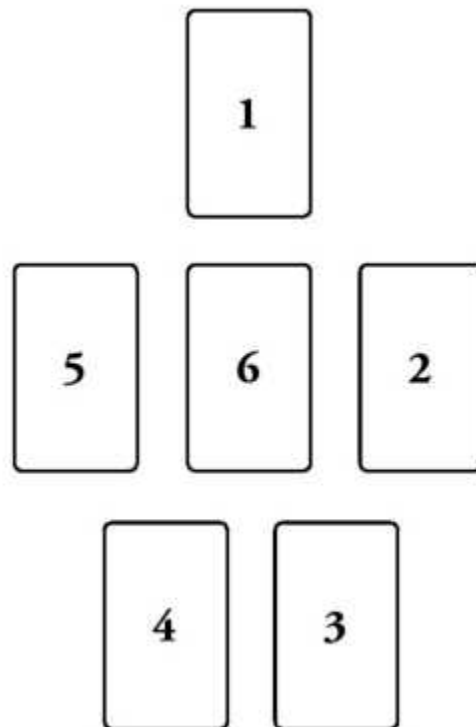
Card 2. How do I develop an interpretation of the whole reading?

Card 3. How do I communicate with the querent?

Card 4. What impression do I give to the querent?

Card 5. What is my reason for reading for others?

Card 6. What could I do to improve my reading technique?



Reading Style Spread

Optional Homework

- Perform at least five readings for other people, preferably people you don't know. You can use any spread you like, but try to focus on communicating the information effectively to them, and note how you create the interpretation for another person. If possible, ask the querent for feedback afterward.

- Perform the Reading Style Spread and think about how you can improve your reading technique or make it more user-friendly!
- Finalize your Code of Tarot Ethics and keep it in a place you can see during readings or in your Tarot Journal.

Further Reading

Counselling Skills for Dummies, by Gail Evans, is a useful introduction to using basic counseling skills, which you can apply to your readings.

21

TIPS AND TRICKS WHEN READING FOR OTHERS

For many Tarot readers, the reason for learning Tarot is to read for others. Many readers wish to provide a service for those who need it, and are keen to use their newfound skill with the cards to help others. This lesson will look at some tips and tricks for those who wish to read for others, and will hopefully inspire you to think about some aspects of reading for others that you may face as you gain experience.

Chatting Isn't Cheating: Interactive Readings

A common misconception about reading for others-especially in a professional context-is that the Tarot reader is the one who should be doing all the talking. We are already aware from previous lessons that some querents just want somebody to listen to them, but we also need to be aware that many of us are not psychic and need some feedback throughout the

reading to guide us. Our role as Tarot readers is not to impress people like a stage magician guessing what card the audience member holds in their hand, but to give them as accurate a reading as possible. Thus, chatting to the querent about their situation and receiving feedback to compare with the cards is not cheating-it is improving the reading.

A good Tarot reader will be able to see the particular meanings of the cards in front of them and weave them together to form a coherent story. But an excellent reader will need to apply this story to something specific in the querent's life in order to make it relevant and therefore useful. Sometimes it is easy to see what aspect of the querent's life the reading is referring to (for example, a predominance of Cups card might indicate a relationship issue), but at other times it is not so clear. At times like this, it is helpful to first give a brief summary of the meanings of the cards, and then ask the querent what specifically the reading is referring to-if they want to tell you.

Sometimes the querent does not wish to tell you what the reading is about. This could be because they want to keep it private, or it could be because they expect you to be psychic and instantly know what they are thinking. If either of these is the case, I like to tell the querent that I will read the cards for them and give examples of how they could apply to the querent's life, but that I cannot apply them specifically or give specific advice. This way the querent is aware that my reading style changes to fit their approach to the cards.

You may find it helpful to ask the querent for clarification at certain points in the reading. For instance, you have given them the interpretation of a card but are confused as to how it might fit specifically into their question. You could ask the querent if the card reminds them of something or somebody in their life; you could simply ask if what you have said makes sense. Many times you'll find that although you are confused regarding the card's place in the reading, what you've said has made sense to the querent and you need go no further.

Other ways of interacting with the querent during the reading include:

- Asking the querent how they feel about the reading.
- Asking the querent if they feel the reading is accurate.
- Asking the querent to look at a specific card and identify an aspect of the image that stands out to them-this image could provide a key to the interpretation of that card in the context of that reading.
- Asking the querent if they need further clarification regarding any aspect of the reading-this could lead to further discussion and analysis of the cards, or to drawing some more cards to provide more detail.
- Asking the querent how they feel about a specific card.
- Before shuffling the cards, you may discuss their question so that you can form it into something readable, clear, and specific, and so that you can create or choose a suitable spread to use for the reading. By clarifying the querent's question you can also clarify the later card interpretations.

Discussion during the reading will also enable the querent to ask any questions they need to regarding your interpretation, giving them the best possible understanding of the reading. By asking them questions, you will also make them an active participant in the reading, emphasizing their role in creating their future. This avoids inadvertently making the querent believe that their future is entirely fixed and out of their control.

A Matter of Seating

When reading for others, we are often in the position of advice-giver and counselor, and are privy to some of the querent's deepest fears and desires, and information they might not divulge to another person. Subtle factors such as body language can help reinforce and encourage trust and open communication, including where each person is seated during the reading.

Many readers sit opposite their querent with a table between them. Unfortunately, this does not allow the querent to see the card images the

right way up, unless you turn them to face them or perform the reading upside-down! It also places an instant blockage between the reader and the querent. This can sometimes make the two people feel like the reading is confrontational, or can encourage the querent to simply sit and listen rather than interacting and discussing. Without card images to focus their attention, they may also not pick up on the symbolism that you are referring to or their attention may wander elsewhere.

You may find it more effective for interactive readings to seat the querent adjacent to you-you on one side of the table and the querent on the side next to it. This allows you to have the spread easily viewable by both yourself and the querent, but also does not infringe on the querent's personal space or comfort zone-after all, you may be a stranger to the querent, so sitting next to them may be too personal.

Atmosphere and Appearance

First impressions are often the ones that stick with us and form a large part of our judgments of somebody. Before we even speak to somebody, we take in their appearance-what clothes they are wearing, their body language, their hair color and style, their gender. Before a person interacts with us, we already believe certain things about them: a scruffy person may be less trustworthy; a woman in a suit and carrying a briefcase seems colder and more efficient; a man who is smiling and laughing warmly seems friendly and approachable. Therefore, we must be aware as Tarot readers that how we look, speak, and act affects the querent's judgment of us, and therefore their receptivity to the reading. Similarly, the location of the reading needs to be welcoming for the querent so that they can immediately relax and be comfortable for the reading.

Some things you should consider are:

- What you wear: Unless you're reading at a Renaissance Faire or some similar event, dressing as Madame Destiny or the Gypsy fortune-teller is not recommended. This outfit makes it seem that you are not a serious reader, and the querent will be less inclined to listen to your

reading or advice. You will need to be well presented, so wearing clean and ironed clothes is recommended! If your reading style is casual, interactive, and friendly, choose clothes that encourage this: a pair of jeans with a smart top or shirt, perhaps, or a skirt and sweater. If you are reading to a certain kind of clientele (artists, Pagans, your friends) then you may wish to alter your outfit to fit that; more colors for an artist, for instance. Similarly, if you are a well-endowed woman, you may wish to make sure the attention of the querent is on the reading and not elsewhere: do not wear a low-cut top!

- The reading table: What is on it? Please ensure before the reading begins that your table is clean and uncluttered-don't read your cards on a surface covered in food from the night before or surrounded by empty beer cans. You might wish to cover your surface with a tablecloth or spread cloth, and perhaps decorate it with a vase of flowers or statue. Also consider placing the chairs where you want them to be for the reading.

- Other items: You may wish to light a candle for the duration of the reading (for some this will form part of their spiritual practice before reading anyway), burn incense (though this can cause problems for some asthmatics), and have a number of other divinatory tools at hand for the reading. This can include some other Tarot decks that the querent can choose from for the reading, or sets of runes, oracle decks, I Ching coins, and more. Some readers might also like to make the querent feel comfortable by having a plate of cookies ready to be offered, a pitcher of water and two glasses, or facilities for making a hot drink available. You might also like to have a box of tissues ready and hidden away just in case. Finally, having a pad of paper and pens out on the table for both your use and that of the querent will be handy.

- Your location: You might wish to read from home, and thus your readings might take place at your dinner table in the lounge, kitchen, or dining room. You may need to consider if there are any family members in the house at that time, and if so warn them that you will be performing a reading at a certain time, and ask them to refrain from

coming into the reading area. You might feel safer (and rightly so) reading in a public area like a park or cafe-choose a place that you know is friendly to Tarot reading, and if possible ask the proprietor beforehand to make sure it's okay. If outside, check the weather, and if it is windy, try using small weighted objects to hold the cards down.

Some tips that are recommended for every reading regardless of location or querent include:

- Smile warmly when you greet the querent.
- Make eye contact to show your interest.
- Ensure your voice isn't too loud or too quiet.
- Watch your body language: don't create a blockage by crossing your arms over your chest. Don't look bored by resting your head on your hand or staring into space, or by maintaining a fixed smile.

The Mind Blank

Every Tarot reader dreads it, and most Tarot readers have experienced it: the moment when you turn over the cards and realize you have absolutely no idea what they mean! This mind blank is a common occurrence for beginners because each Tarot reading is a little bit stressful when you are still not confident in your skills or knowledge. Just like when you go into an exam or job interview and find your mind suddenly empty of knowledge, you may start a Tarot reading with a blank mind. To add further difficulty to this situation, your querent is sitting with you expecting your ensuing answer, so the clock is ticking and you begin to panic.

The mind blank is natural. It can even be useful. When your mind is blank, it is open and ready to receive information. Use this moment to look at the cards in front of you, breathe deeply, and look at the images. Do not start thinking about the querent's expectations, only focus on the moment of stillness in your mind. Then, when you are calm and confident after this stillness, start talking. Talk at first about the cards and their images, their

symbols. Don't relate their meanings to the question yet-just talk about them. This will start your mind back into its interpretation gear and eventually you'll start to see the meaning of the spread.

Another trick that I was taught by an experienced reader is to start the reading with a blunt pencil and sharpener by your pad of notepaper. After you've laid out the cards, pick up the pencil and start sharpening it, and use the time it takes to sharpen the pencil to look at the cards and get over the initial panic you have during that moment of uncertainty and mind blank.

Optional Homework

Perform some readings for other people-either friends or strangers-with an awareness of the advice in the previous sections "Chatting Isn't Cheating," "A Matter of Seating," and "Atmosphere and Appearance." After the readings have finished, write down some notes about how you felt each reading went. Did you find these readings easier? Did the querent respond readily? Was the querent interested throughout? Where was their attention?

22

THE NEXT STEP

We've finally reached the conclusion of the lessons, and you should have gained confidence in your reading abilities, knowledge of the cards and their meanings as well as their versatility, and skills for reading for yourself and others. However, your learning should not be completed: the Tarot is a subject that can take a lifetime to learn about and, at the end, still have more to offer. Since it contains within it a reflection of the mysteries of the universe and the human experience, it would be impossible to ever know everything about it. You will also continue to grow and develop through experience in the years to come, and hopefully even ten, fifteen, thirty years down the line you will still be finding new techniques, approaches, and aspects in the Tarot. This chapter gives you some ideas about where to go from here to continue your learning.

Places for Fellow Tarot Lovers

One of the best ways to continue improving your reading skills and knowledge of the cards is to discuss the Tarot with others. The Internet provides a number of excellent discussion forums that you can join, where

you can discuss any aspects of the Tarot, swap readings, buy, sell, and trade Tarot decks, read reviews of new Tarot decks and books, and seek advice from others. There are also online groups that organize real-time meetups and discussion groups. I highly recommend finding some discussion forums to join, though your area may not have any groups that meet up in person. You could, however, consider starting one!

Tarot Forums

- Aeclectic Tarot Forum (<http://www.aeclectic.net>)
- Tarot
Comparative
(<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ComparativeTarot/>)
- Tarot Collector's Forum (<http://www.tarotcollectors.com/>)
- Tarot for Life (<http://www.tarotforlife.com/phpBB3/index.php>)
- Tarot L (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TarotL/>)
- Tarot History Forum (<http://forum.tarothistory.com/>)

Meetups

Website: <http://tarot.meetup.com/>

These Tarot Meetups often consist of short talks, workshops, and presentations from members of the group and visiting speakers, as well as a chance to swap readings with others, compare decks, discuss the cards with fellow enthusiasts, and swap items. They are a great way to meet like-minded people as well. Don't be afraid to start your own Meetup if you think your city has enough Tarot enthusiasts in it! You can do this through the Tarot Meetup Groups website, and by advertising at local bookstores, coffee shops, art centers, and New Age shops.

Collecting Tarot Decks

A number of Tarot readers also become Tarot deck collectors. The reasons for doing so abound, and there are many suggestions from both collectors and non-collectors. Many noncollectors believe deck collectors desire quantity over quality. Others think it is done for the artwork and aesthetics provided by so many decks. Still others think people collect because they are still searching for "the one": the deck that we feel so drawn to that we can use it for readings forever. Indeed, for some collectors these may be the reasons, but they are not the only reasons for collecting Tarot decks.

Collecting decks allows you to build up a mindscape for every card in the deck. When you are familiar with fifty different Death cards, you may be aware of subtle nuances from one deck regarding the card that have not appeared in the current deck being used for the reading. This helps with interpretation and ensures that the reader does not fall into the bad habit of reading the cards the same way each time. With each Tarot deck comes another artist's interpretation of the cards and their meanings, new symbols, new approaches, and new aspects for you to consider.

Collecting decks can also be useful for later when you might want to teach Tarot to others-it gives you a large number of decks you can take to your classes or workshops for participants to use and play with. It can also be nice to have some decks for a querent to choose from at the start of a reading, giving them an active role in the reading.

However, Tarot deck collecting can be highly addictive and expensive, so you should be certain about your reasons for doing it. If your reason is to get a deck collection larger than somebody else's collection, then you're doing it for the wrong reasons!

Once you start collecting, I'd advise starting small-buy only the mass-market, widely available decks that you think you'll like. Publishing companies such as Llewellyn, U.S. Games, and Lo Scarabeo publish a wide variety of decks every year, so there is plenty to choose from. These initial decks might become your reading decks while you explore their symbolism and take on the cards. Eventually you might grow tired of buying mass-market decks, and this is the time when you need to consider why you are

collecting: are you collecting because you want to learn more and have a wide variety of decks at your disposal? Or are you collecting for the same reasons you might collect stamps or Ming Dynasty dinnerware? If the former, then purchasing hard-to-find, out-of-print, and expensive decks isn't necessarily going to help you (unless the deck in question is particularly attractive to you for reasons other than its high price); if the latter, then you'll need to consider spending a lot of money to purchase some of the rarer decks. Such decks are investments, and it would be wise to insure and properly store such a collection.

I recommend buying some of your decks secondhand in order to keep the cost of your collection low. Collections are rarely read with, so if you're buying decks to look at them, study them, but not read with them, a secondhand deck will provide you with those things without the concerns some people have about reading with secondhand decks.

Creating Your Own Deck

We have already explored creating Vision Boards with the Court Cards in Lesson 15, and it was suggested then that these Vision Boards become the first cards in a deck you create yourself. You can effectively use that Vision Board technique for any of the cards in the deck and start creating your own right away.

Creating your own Tarot deck is an infinitely rewarding experience and will improve your understanding and knowledge of the cards greatly. To create a single card requires you to assess its meaning on both a traditional level and a personal level, and then translate that meaning into an image and set of symbols that you understand and can relate to. This translation process not only helps you get the card and its meaning clear in your mind, but it inspires you to think deeper about its many facets, and hopefully discover something new in each card.

For those with artistic talent, creating a deck poses less of a problem, but for those who have no skill in this area, it can pose several new challenges. Firstly, what medium should you use? You might like to try collage, since it

doesn't require your own artwork, but it is limited to the images you can find that have already been created elsewhere. Photographic decks are also fun, and you can get friends and family members to pose for the cards. You could even try collaborating with an artist who is also interested in Tarot to create a deck together.

Creating an entire deck can take years of hard work, so you may wish to create a Majors-only deck at first. Or you might wish to only create a few cards of a deck, choosing cards that you feel you need to work with and understand better. You might also wish to create a deck based on a theme you are fond of to further explore the cards as they are applied to other areas of life.

Going Professional

Once you have gained more confidence in your reading style and skill, you might wish to start doing professional readings. This could be as simple as putting up some flyers in a local health food or New Age store for readings, and charging for those readings. You can do as many or as few readings as you like, and if you enjoy reading for money you could turn it into a part-time home business. Such a move requires a lot of consideration and a little capital, so it's highly recommended that you do plenty of research on starting up your own business, and the prices of other Tarot readers in your area. You'll also want to try and get a niche market if there are already a number of other readers in your vicinity.

It's not essential to go professional to be a Tarot reader. You can choose to use your skill for only yourself, your friends, and your family. Many people don't have time to be a professional Tarot reader alongside all the other things they are doing in their lives. But if you are keen to try it out, I highly recommend reading Professional Tarot, which is on the Further Reading list at the end of this lesson.

A Final Thought

My dearest wish is that this course is only a stepping stone on a long and eventful journey toward a greater understanding and higher wisdom. I wish

that you continue to learn more about the Tarot for many years to come, and that it provides you with guidance, insight, and awareness. May you never stop learning.

Optional Homework

- Create your own Tarot deck!
- Join at least one of the above Tarot discussion forums and get chatting.
- Continue reading for yourself and others, and keep up a Daily Draw/Weekly Draw practice if you have one.
- Keep a Tarot journal up to date and in use.

Further Reading

Professional Tarot: The Business of Reading, Consulting and Teaching, by Christine Jerre, is highly recommended before you begin to set up any form of professional Tarot reading service. Also has excellent suggestions for Tarot teaching and workshops.

The Aeclectic Tarot Forum community Tarot decks, collaboratively created by forum members. Great inspiration for your own deck.
(<http://www.aeclectic.net/tarot/project/>)

APPENDIX I

THE FOUR ELEMENTS

Earth

Soil, dirt, peat, bricks, houses, trees, forests, nature, the human body, the planet

Colors: Browns, greens, blacks

Qualities: Fertility, growth, trade, everyday life, survival, necessity, feminine, receptive, health, money, business, the land, food, nurture, growth, decay, grounding, protection, nourishment, home, loyalty

Astrology: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn

Season: Autumn

Archangel: Uriel

Wiccan symbol.- Pentacle

Mythical creature: Satyr

Elemental: Gnome

Air

Breath, wind, song, shout, words, cries, oxygen, the atmosphere

Colors: Blues, whites, yellows

Qualities: Communication, learning, the mind, knowledge, ideas, invention, logic, words, letters, study, university, memory, change, teaching, wisdom

Astrology: Aquarius, Gemini, Libra

Season: Spring

Archangel: Raphael

Wiccan symbol.- Sword, athame

Mythical Creature: Pegasus

Elemental: Sylph

Fire

Candles, lights, campfires, ovens, stars, the sun, forest fires

Colors: Reds, oranges, blacks, yellows

Qualities: The energetic, drive, will, passion, desire, ambition, triumph, anger, aggression, purification, ego, confidence

Astrology: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius

Season: Summer

Archangel: Michael

Wiccan symbol.- Wand

Mythical creature: Phoenix

Elemental: Salamander

Water

Taps, baths, showers, ponds, lakes, oceans, blood, bile, streams, drinks, rain

Colors: Blues, purples, greens

Qualities: The emotional, feelings, the heart, love, relationships, social situations, blood, menstruation, healing, compassion, intuition, psychic ability, surrender, spirituality

Astrology: Pisces, Cancer, Scorpio

Season: Winter

Archangel: Gabriel

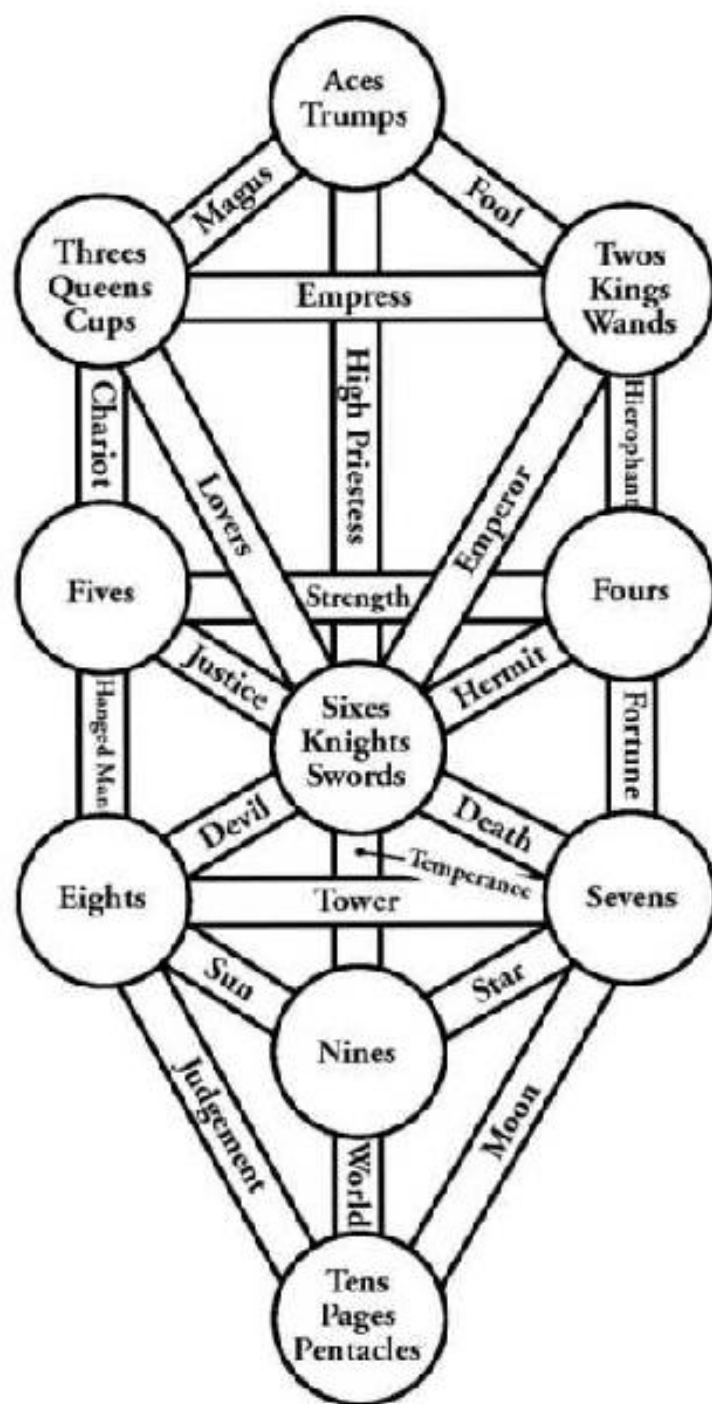
Wiccan symbol.- The Chalice

Mythical creature: Mermaid

Elemental: Undine

APPENDIX 2

THE TREE OF LIFE



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Kim Huggens has been studying the Tarot since she was nine years old. She is the co-creator of two Tarot decks, and her writing has appeared in *Offerings* magazine, *Pentacle* magazine, and in the *American Tarot Association Quarterly*. She is also the editor of several anthologies of nonfiction work on mythology, magic, and occultism. Today, she gives talks and workshops on Tarot throughout the United Kingdom.



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Table of Contents

[Acknowledgments](#)

[A Note about the Structure of the Course](#)

[Getting Started](#)

[1. Introduction](#)

[What Can It Do?](#)

[Why Are You Here?](#)

[Deck Reviews](#)

[Where to Buy](#)

[Optional Homework](#)

[2. The Language of Tarot](#)

[The Nature of Symbolism](#)

[Learning Tarot Effectively](#)

[Myths Surrounding Tarot](#)

[Further Reading](#)

[3. The Major Arcana: Introduction and Progress Cards](#)

[The Order of the Majors: Norms and Variants](#)

[Ideas of Importance](#)

[Joseph Campbell's Monomyth](#)

[The Hero's Journey](#)

[0 The Fool](#)

[I The Magician](#)

[VII The Chariot](#)

[4. The Major Arcana: Feminine Archetypes](#)

[Maiden, Mother, Crone, Whore, and Other Feminine Archetypes](#)

[Goddess Archetype Spread](#)

[II The High Priestess](#)

[Developing Your Intuition](#)

[III The Empress](#)

[XVII The Star](#)

[5. Reading Tarot: Beginnings](#)

[The Objectives of a Reader](#)

[The Physical Process of Reading](#)

[Your Reading Style](#)

[Saying the Meanings Aloud](#)

[Learning with Others: Practice Readings](#)

[Practicing Objectivity](#)

[6. The Major Arcana: Masculine Archetypes](#)

[The Four Elements, Suits, and Courts](#)

[Other Masculine Archetypes](#)

[IV The Emperor](#)

[V The Hierophant](#)

[IX The Hermit](#)

[The Elemental Spread](#)

[7. The Major Arcana: Virtues and Vices](#)

[Thelemic Retellings](#)

[XI Justice/VIII Adjustment](#)

[VIII Strength/XI Lust](#)

[XIV Temperance/Art](#)

[Alchemical Roses](#)

[The Great Rite Alchemy Spread](#)